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Choosing Jessy

[image]

"I think you know I have to. If I stay, you...you may not follow where your heart truly lies."

Bramblestar was startled, he knew Jessy was referring to Squirrelflight. She was making sense, Squirrelflight and him have been together through thick and thin. She was the daughter of Firestar.

But Firestar is gone now, and both his kits have brought disaster in their wake: Leafpool breaking the code with a WindClan tom and lying for so long, and Squirrelflight for covering up for her.

He remembered Squirrelflight's face when Hollyleaf told the truth, the need for understanding that she had *lied* to her own partner about their kits being theirs.

He remembered the pride he had in his kits, how he watched over them knowing they were *his* kits, and that beautiful image was shattered. Squirrelflight *caused* this.

Than why did I make her deputy?

"I'm sorry, I-"

"No." Bramblestar interrupted Jessy. "I won't let this happen."

"Wh-What do you mean?" Jessy tilted her head. "Squirrelflight's the mother of your kits! Or, sort of."

"That's the point, Jessy." Bramblestar sighed. "You know they were raised by us, but you don't know the story. At *least* let me tell you the story before you consider leaving."

Jessy nodded. "OK."

"Leafpool was a medicine cat when she fell in love with a WindClan

tom, which breaks two rules. One, she can't have a mate or kits, because she is a medicine cat. And two, because two cats from other Clans can't have kits." Bramblestar explained. "She is the mother of Jayfeather and Lionblaze, but she couldn't show it. So Squirrelflight was willing to raise them, but she *lied to me.* I didn't learn about it till Hollyleaf, Leafpool's third kit, revealed it to all the Clans."

"..." Jessy was speechless.

"I can't be with her after that, that'd make her think that it's OK to *lie* to me." Bramblestar felt like he wanted to cry. Jessy came closer and rested her tail on his back.

"No wonder you seem so stressed...besides the fact that you're leader." Jessy purred. "But Squirrelflight has been mean to me and-"

"Wait, what?!" Bramblestar cried. "Why didn't you tell me this?"

"Because not only is she *deputy,* the whole Clan didn't believe me! I told Daisy and she yelled 'nonsense!' to me! Squirrelflight attempted several times to poison my fresh-kill! Nobody would listen to me! And sometimes I'd put protecting this Clan over opening my big mouth!" Jessy protested.

"I'm sorry that Squirrelflight did that." Bramblestar touched his nose to Jessy's. "If you be my mate, you can sleep in my den when the camp is no longer flooded. And I'll tell you many stories of my life, the Clans, as you sleep. I *promise* this Clan will accept you, and I love you. Very much."

Jessy smiled.

"I love you too." Jessy purred. "And...I think I'll stay and maybe try apprenticeship."

"That's wonderful to hear." Bramblestar purred. "We must go back, and I'll uphold an apprentice ceremony for you."

Bramblestar and Jessy twined tails and walked back.

"All cats of ThunderClan! I have another ceremony to do!"

Squirrelflight's head turned quickly from Stormpaw. She got up, not knowing it was her rival. Graystripe and Sandstorm walked ahead, helping Cinderheart along.

"I think that the she-cat that helped us fight the kittypets and the badgers deserves a chance at becoming an apprentice!" Bramblestar beckoned Jessy over to him. She touched his shoulder affectionately.

Squirrelflight's jaws dropped but no words came out. Leafpool and Sandstorm looked appalled, but no other cats seemed to have a bad reaction. Millie and Daisy gave purrs of approval.

"Jessy, do you wish to learn the ways of the warrior code, the history of the Clans, and the importance of every cat?" Bramblestar asked.

"I do." Jessy purred.

"Than by the power of StarClan, you're new name will be Gempaw. I will be your mentor." Bramblestar and Gempaw touched noses, and she returned to the crowd. Stormpaw congratulated her, and so did Millie and Daisy.

Squirrelflight walked up to Bramblestar.

"More cats f-f-for the Clan..." Squirrelflight gave a weak smile. "That's grea-er...great!"

Bramblestar smirked. Squirrelflight would realize soon enough that this would never had happened if she hadn't lied about the kits.

She walked away, her tail trailing the dirt.

Cinderheart came up Bramblestar next.

"Hello. Can I help you, Cinderheart?" Bramblestar asked.

"I know who you choose as your mate or whom you apprentice is your choice." Cinderheart explained. "But you know Squirrelflight, she'll never stop until she gets what she wants. And you're playing a *dangerous* game by doing this. I'm saying this for the safety of you

and Gempaw, I promise."

"I'm her leader!" Bramblestar snapped. "She couldn't possibly hurt anyone!"

"Don't be so sure..." Cinderheart walked away. "Stay safe, Bramblestar."

Three moons later

"Push, Cinderheart!" Jayfeather said.

Bramblestar and Gempaw saw as the first kit was born.

"Here, Gempaw." Jayfeather handed Gempaw a dark grey she-kit. Than a tortoiseshell she-kit and black she-kit followed.

Lionblaze came in and touched his nose to Cinderheart's. He looked down at the three she-kits with love. Bramblestar understood, they were probably thinking of all the wonderful times him and Cinderheart shared.

"They're beautiful." Lionblaze and Cinderheart named them Fernkit, Sorrelkit, and Hollykit.

"Your grandkits!" Gempaw purred. "Isn't that wonderful?"

"It is." Bramblestar shook off the thought of their mother. Squirrelflight passed by, her eyes were dark.

"Lionblaze's kits are born!" Bramblestar called out. Sandstorm and Leafpool came and looked at them.

Wouldn't Squirrelflight want to see her kits?

Squirrelflight glanced in the direction of the Nursery.

She turned away and disappeared into the warrior's den.

Gempaw and Cinderheart's kits

[image]

"Gempaw!"

Gempaw's eyes fluttered open and she yawned. She walked over to her mentor and their tails twined. Most cats in the Clan knew they were mates(unofficially, until she'd become a warrior), and although some cats congratulated the two, most were wary.

Why was that? Squirrelflight and her family were acting riled up, and were very passive aggressive about it. Leafpool tensed when Gempaw asked to clean a scratch from battle training. Others were frightened on how passionately she battled, Stormpaw returning to his mentor with a scratch on his muzzle and dismissing it.

Another thing, Bramblestar didn't like the fact he and Squirrelflight were basically joint mentors. He would obviously show his reluctance, and Squirrelflight would flinch and walk away, or get the partner training over with.

"If it means anything, I like training with you!" Stormpaw purred to Gempaw during one battle session.

"Thanks, Stormpaw." Gempaw smiled. "I'm sorry about your mentor."

"It's cool, she isn't that bad on a good day!" Stormpaw joked.

Bramblestar leaded his apprentice out of camp for a hunting session. He had shared some of his early apprentice memories with Gempaw as he promised, her listening to every word intently.

Also, what has happened in the three moons between Gempaw's apprentice ceremony and Cinderheart's kitting was tough. The Clans had become more and more intolerant of ThunderClan poking it's nose into everyone's business. Mistystar, being the daughter of a ThunderClan leader, was the most tolerant of the other three

leaders.

Rowanstar however, lashed out when Leafpool tried to help when some of his apprentices had Greencough, and Onestar had started accusing ThunderClan of stealing prey off their territory.

"What are you thinking of, Bramblestar?" Gempaw asked.

"The last Gathering. You were there, the male leaders were very upset at us." Bramblestar explained.

"What for, that Leafpool wanted to help?" Gempaw shook her head. "I don't get it."

"It's a long history." Bramblestar sighed. "Dating back even before the Clans."

"What was before the Clans?" Gempaw asked. "Was Firestar around then?"

"No." Bramblestar tried not to laugh. "Waaaaaay back, before his grandfather was born probably."

"Oh. *That* long ago." Gempaw realized. "Do you remember any names?"

"Just Thunder and Gray Wing." Bramblestar answered. "The history that we remember is little to none since we've dealt with the Great Battle and the flood to teach history lessons."

"It sounds like a lot of history to cover than to just me!" Gempaw pointed out. "I'll track down some prey."

Gempaw ran ahead of Bramblestar.

Hmm, maybe I'll have Squirrelflight teach some of the young warriors...if she'll follow my orders, that is.

After a few minutes, Gempaw came back with a shrew and a squirrel.

"Very good." Bramblestar purred. "Let's head back."

Gempaw trotted happily into camp, she disappeared into the elder's den.

She's learned the warrior code well, but I hope Sandstorm doesn't give her any lip about being my better choice.

"Welcome back, Bramblestar." Lionblaze gave his father a small nod.

"Thank you, how are my granddaughters?" Bramblestar asked.

"Wonderful, Sandstorm shared a story about their grandfather and her when they were apprentices under Bluestar, I listened too." Lionblaze purred. "They love her stories and Graystripe's too."

"But not Purdy's?" Bramblestar half-teased.

"Oh well, that's the thing." Lionblaze sighed. "Purdy has started coughing, and he tried to tell Stormpaw a story this morning. Jayfeather had to come in and help as he was coughing."

"That's not good." Bramblestar replied. "I'll check on him later. But I want to see my grandkits. Let me go get Gempaw."

"Eh..." Lionblaze was audible enough for Bramblestar to hear as he walked away. He turned around and narrowed his eyes.

"What's 'eh'?" Bramblestar slightly growled. "Gempaw has a right."

"It'd make sense if Squirrelflight visited with you." Lionblaze explained. "But Gempaw has only been around for three moons, and you're already bringing her into the family and it's kinda..."

"Kinda *what,* Lionblaze?" Bramblestar curled his lip to show his teeth. "Gempaw is my *mate,* and she has a right to see the kits as much as any *ThunderClan cat!"*

Bramblestar sighed, it was the first time he referred to Gempaw as his mate. A few cats had gave glances and their ears perked, and Squirrelflight was sharing tongues with Whitewing when he said that. She coughed on Whitewing's fur and her eyes widened.

"You alright, Squirrelflight?" Whitewing whispered.

"Yea, yea, course yea!" Squirrelflight shook her head after she stammered. "I'm going to hunt!"

She left, and Gempaw came up to Bramblestar.

"Thanks for standing up for me." Gempaw purred. "Let's go see the kits."

"Oh, right! Would it be alright if I told them you were their grandmother?" Bramblestar whispered. "I know it'd be weird, but you'd be a better grandmother than Squirrelflight anyday!"

"No." Lionblaze growled. "Squirrelflight raised us, Gempaw shouldn't get the right to a title she hasn't earned."

"I'm leader!" Bramblestar rounded on his son. "I decide who gets what title, Squirrelflight's lucky she's still *deputy!"*

"Why would you even revoke that title?!" Leafpool hissed. "She deserved it!"

"By lying, complaining, and being stuck up. You're right! Squirrelflight *did* deserve that title!" Bramblestar laughed passive agressively. "Why shouldn't I listen to the she-cat that gave birth to Half-WindClan kits?!"

Leafpool flinched from the insult.

"Bramblestar, I think you're getting out of paw." Gempaw whispered. "Let's see the kits tomorrow, and we'll rest in your den. Does that sound good?"

"Yeah, sorry Gempaw." Bramblestar touched his touch to her's.

They both left into his den.

Squirrelflight watched as they did so from behind the bushes, she stiffened a cry and left to actually hunt.

StarClan, what did I do to deserve this?

The Heart of a Dove

[image]

Bramblestar felt Gempaw cuddle beside him as they rested in the leader's den. He sighed happily and licked Gempaw's cheek.

She's learning about the Clans fast, and I've told her about my life enough times that I trust her wholeheartedly...but I haven't told her about Tigerstar yet.

Bramblestar fell back asleep.

Suddenly, Bramblestar was in a dream. He saw a cat with stars in her pelt approach him.

"Yellowfang!" Bramblestar meowed. "What brings you here?"

"You've made a horrible choice!" Yellowfang snarled, she lifted on her hind legs and slapped Bramblestar. "What were you thinking?!"

"First of all, ow!" Bramblestar's tail touched his injured cheek. "Secondly, what are you talking about?"

"Don't play stupid with me!" Yellowfang growled. "Jessy hasn't raised kits with you, she hasn't traveled on the Great Journey with you! She's not your deputy!"

"So I have to be mates with Squirrelflight?!" Bramblestar's eyes narrowed. "Isn't whom I choose...I don't know! MY CHOICE?"

"In any other case, yes!" Yellowfang was calmer now. "But you were destined to choose Squirrelflight, and didn't! You two are perfect for each other, why did you not choose her?"

"Because she betrayed me!" Bramblestar cried. "Everything I've ever known was a lie! I LOVED THEM, BUT THEY'RE LEAFPOOL'S! THEY'RE THAT SCAMP'S KITS!"

"Quit acting immature!" Yellowfang hissed. "I understand how Leafpool

feels."

"I bet you do!" Bramblestar grinned with his teeth showing. "Giving birth as a medicine cat, what did that lead to? You and Raggedstar didn't stay together!"

"This is different!" Yellowfang cried. "You don't have to punish Squirrelflight for this!"

"YES I DO!" Bramblestar growled. "And you know what? After Gempaw becomes a warrior, she's taking Squirrelflight's place!"

"You can't do that!" Yellowang wailed.

"Yes, I can!" Bramblestar retorted. "The warrior code says the leader's word is the code!"

"You don't get it!" Yellowfang was shaking. "You're only with Jessy just to stick to Squirrelflight!"

"HER NAME'S GEMPAW!" Bramblestar roared. "AND I AM NOT! I LOVE GEMPAW!"

"StarClan will punish you for not choosing Squirrelflight!" Yellowfang hissed softly. "She was supposed to have YOUR kits!"

And with that, Yellowfang disappeared.

Bramblestar got up. He noticed Gempaw was not by his side.

He got up and walked up to Squirrelflight.

"Where is Gempaw?" Bramblestar asked.

"You overslept." Squirrelflight had a slight growl in her voice. "So she left on a hunting patrol."

"Oh, OK." Bramblestar looked back at Squirrelflight. "Before I go talk to her, and need to speak with you. In my den."

Squirrelflight's eyes lit up. Bramblestar looked at her unexpectedly.

Does she seriously think I'm going to ask her to be her mate again?

"Yes, Bramblestar?" Squirrelflight's tail flicked side-to-side, and her eyes glowed.

"I think we should teach the younger cats about the history of the Clans." Bramblestar explained.

"Oh." Squirrelflight's eyes were no longer glowing, and her tail dropped.

"What did you *think* I was going to say?" Bramblestar muttered. "I want you to bring all the cats born after the Great Journey in front of the elder's den. I'll talk to Graystripe and Sandstorm."

"Good hunting skills, Gempaw!"

"Thanks, Bumblestripe!" Gempaw purred as she picked up her thrush. She went on Bumblestripe's patrol, consisting of him, her, Rosepetal, and Lionblaze.

"Yes, it certainly was!" Rosepetal brushed against Bumblestripe. "Lionblaze?"

"I'm listening for prey!" Lionblaze lied. "I can't talk now!"

Gempaw's fur almost bristled when she saw Squirrelflight's glare burning into her from the bushes. Squirrelflight charged and stopped when she noticed Gempaw wasn't alone.

Why is she trying to threaten me?!

"Bramblestar wants all of you in front of the elder's den." Squirrelflight said without emotion. "Now."

"OK, can you take my fresh-kill back for me?" Gempaw asked Squirrelflight.

"Of course." Squirrelflight took it in her jaws. "Now hurry."

Gempaw ran separately from her patrol and stopped when she heard intense purring.

Who's that? Is it one of our one cats? I'll let them know a meeting's going

on!

Gempaw followed the sound and her fur bristled.

It was Dovewing with another cat.

The cat looked a lot like Bramblestar. He leaned against Dovewing and she purred back with a gleam in her eyes.

"You're *much* better than Bumblestripe!" Dovewing purred. "I...have to get back to camp."

"Go on, you *naughty* she-cat." the tom growled seductively. "You'll be on my mind as I get back."

Dovewing ran past Gempaw. Gempaw's jaw dropped.

Dovewing and Bumblestripe were mates? Dovewing's awful!

Gempaw ran back and saw Bramblestar was gathering the cats around the elder's den. Jayfeather was leading Purdy to the medicine cat's den.

I hope Purdy's alright!

Dovewing fell into the crowd. She rudely stepped away from Bumblestripe, he gave a hurt look.

"ThunderClan, I wish to bring you here so Sandstorm and Graystripe may share some of their stories of before the Great Journey! Also, Brackenfur and Thornclaw will share some of their's as well."

Most cats sighed, but Gempaw listened intently. By the time Thornclaw was done, most cats were asleep. Gempaw noticed Dovewing was gone.

Of course she is, I should tell Bramblestar...

After Gempaw left, Squirrelflight took the thrush and ate it herself. She grinned as she pawed the feathers and licked the blood off her lips.

They'll think it was Jessy that ate the bird and broke the warrior code! Ha! Bramblestar will be all over *me soon enough!*

Squirrelflight got up and ran back to camp.

Clan Blues

[image]

"Cherryfall, Snowlight, and Berrynose will be on a hunting patrol beside the ShadowClan. I'll lead the patrol."

Bramblestar saw Cloudtail purr beside Brightheart. A moon before the birth of Cinderheart's kits, Brightheart's litter became warriors: Amberdrop, Snowlight, Dewshade.

Before Bramblestar was ready to lead the dawn patrol, a certain trio of she-kits ran out of the Nursery.

"Bramblestar! Bramblestar!" they meowed in union. "Where's grandma?"

"Which one?" Hollykit asked her sisters. "Lionblaze says it's Squirrelflight, but who do you say it is?"

"Gempaw!" Sorrelkit answered.

"Don't be silly, Squirrelflight *raised* Jayfeather and Lionblaze!" Fernkit protested.

"Wait, isn't Leafpool our grandmother?" Sorrelkit pondered.

"Come on, kits." Brackenfur placed his tail around the three. "Bramblestar's busy now. Have a good patrol, Bramblestar."

"Thank you, let's go." Bramblestar beckoned his patrol over and they left camp.

"What about Gempaw?" Berrynose asked.

"She's been waking up earlier than me every sunrise!" Bramblestar purred. "She already set out on Spiderleg's patrol toward the WindClan border!"

"Shouldn't you be supervising your apprentice?" Cherryfall asked.

"I trust that she'll do well and-"

"Wait, Bramblestar! Look!" Snowlight ran to a half-eaten bird. "It smells of ThunderClan! One of our warriors has eaten before the elders and queens!"

"Let me see." Bramblestar walked toward it and sniffed it. He growled.

"Who was it?" Berrynose asked.

"*Squirrelflight"* Bramblestar said her name in the same tone someone would say "crow-food."

"The Clan deputy?!" Cherryfall gasped. "It can't be!"

"Berrynose, lead the patrol for me." Bramblestar ordered. "I'm heading back to camp."

Gempaw leaped and caught a mouse near the stream. Spiderleg nodded.

"Good job, Gempaw." Ivypool meowed.

"You're doing well in the Clan, I see why Bramblestar has pride in you." Millie added.

"Thanks, I-"

"SNAKE!"

Gempaw froze and saw a familiar orange pelt come into view. Squirrelflight ran past Ivypool and Millie and stopped dangerously close to Gempaw.

"I saw a half-eaten bird on the ShadowClan border!" Squirrelflight growled at Gempaw. "It had *your* scent all over it!"

"I'm confused. You weren't on Bramblestar's patrol at *all."* Ivypool pointed out. "How would you have known if Gempaw had eaten a bird if you weren't on the patrol?"

"You little sneak!" Spiderleg ignored Ivypool's statement and stomped over to Gempaw. "I knew you were trouble!"

"Leave her alone." Millie growled. "Let's ask Bramblestar about it first!"

Suddenly, Gempaw noticed the fur on Squirrelflight's pelt stand.

She did it to frame me! Bramblestar will believe me!

Millie and Ivypool shielded Gempaw and lead her back, her mouse in her jaws.

Bramblestar rushed back to ThunderClan camp. He stopped when he saw Bluestar blocking the camp entrance.

"Shouldn't you be back in StarClan, Bluestar?" Bramblestar muttered. "Out of my way."

"No." Bluestar snarled. "Not until you right this wrongful thing you have done."

"Oh, please." Bramblestar sighed, he walked past Bluestar. "Is this because of Firestar? Is he mad that I've upset his *precious mate* and *daughters?"*

"NO!" Bluestar shouted with rage. "If you don't kick Gempaw out of the Clan by the full moon, we will punish all of ThunderClan!"

"Except for Firestar's family, right?" Bramblestar sneered. "Do you cats back in StarClan have nothing else to do besides taunt the living?"

Bramblestar gave Bluestar a dirty look and walked back into camp.

"All cats of ThunderClan, come here!"

"Wait, Bramblestar!" Squirrelflight cried as the five cats rushed into camp. "Gempaw-"

"I already *know."* Bramblestar hissed.

Gempaw shook and Squirrelflight gave a smirk.

"Attention ThunderClan, it has come to my attention a certain she-cat has eaten fresh-kill without offering it to the elders. Squirrelflight?" Bramblestar called her forward.

Squirrelflight's evil stare held as she walked up to her former mate. "Yes?"

"Do you or do you not deny that you have committed this crime?" Bramblestar restrained a laugh when Squirrelflight's face fell.

"Why would *I* have done this?!" Squirrelflight's eyes lit with anger. "I've been your loyal deputy for moons now!"

"Have you?" Bramblestar growled. "I smelled *your* scent on it, Squirrelflight. So did all of my patrol."

"I didn't do this!" Squirrelflight tried fake-crying, but Bramblestar's glare didn't waver.

"As punishment, for two moons you will *not* be deputy, but a low apprentice. Everyone must address her as *Squirrelpaw* now. She will also eat last and when she isn't hunting, she'll be cleaning out the elder's den and picking their ticks. Till then, Brackenfur will hold the duty as temporary deputy." Bramblestar explained. "Anyone caught calling her Squirrelflight or feeding her will be punished. Dismissed."

Squirrelpaw looked around in horror. Leafpool looked at her sadly.

Bramblestar walked in between her and Squirrelpaw.

"I suggest you get to it, *Squirrelpaw."* Bramblestar snarled. "Purdy needs herbs for his cough, go fetch them from Jayfeather."

Squirrelpaw walked away.

"What about Stormpaw?" Gempaw asked as she dropped her mouse on the fresh-kill pile.

"Right, one more thing!" Bramblestar called to his Clan. "Stormpaw

will now be mentored by Blossomfall till he becomes a warrior, Squirrelpaw will *not* be able to mentor him when her punishment is lifted. That is all."

"NO!" Leafpool cried, running to Bramblestar. "YOU CAN'T DO THIS!"

"But you can have kits?" Bramblestar sneered. "Go look for herbs, or do you want to be banished? I doubt Crowfeather will take you back!"

Leafpool shook, her eyes glassy. She quickly left. Bramblestar noticed Cinderheart's kits saw the whole thing.

"Well, it certainly isn't Squirrel*paw"* Fernkit muttered. "Or Leafpool..."

"Not if Bramblestar can help it." Hollykit sighed sadly.

Bramblestar ignored them and walked off.

Gempaw took her mouse to the elder's den, where Squirrelpaw sent her a glare.

Gempaw left and shared a starling with Amberdrop and Mousewhisker. She left to Bramblestar's den. But she heard a whimper and stopped.

It was Dovewing.

Gempaw watched as Dovewing put her front paws around her belly and cried softly. Gempaw tilted her head.

What was that about?

Silver Beetle on Ice

[image]

Squirrelpaw got up out of the warrior's den and flicked her tail to her Clanmates. She left the den and saw Bramblestar stomp towards her.

"What do you want, Bramblestar?" Squirrelpaw growled tiredly. "Me to go on three hunting patrols? Clean out all the dens?"

"Because you have a big mouth, yes." Bramblestar snarled. "You *were* going to go on two and clean out just the elder's because I'm in a good mood, but you really seem to dampen that. Also, since you've had a nasty attitude a half-moon into your punishment, you're going to go sleep in the apprentice's den till your two moons is up."

"Screw you." Squirrelpaw hissed. "You can't keep me from the warrior's den."

"Brackenfur!" Bramblestar called. Brackenfur trotted over to Bramblestar's side.

"Can I help you, Bramblestar?" Brackenfur asked.

"Yea, after you set up the dawn patrols. Can you tell Bumblestripe, Rosepetal, Blossomfall, and Dewshade to guard the apprentice den at night? Tell them to drag Squirrelpaw in there if she refuses and confine her there." Bramblestar ordered. "Oh, and I don't want Stormpaw to get involved in this, so he can sleep in the warrior's den till her punishment has been lifted."

"Why don't you let him sleep with you in *your* den?" Squirrelpaw said tauntingly. "Oh, wait. *Nevermind, that's Jessy."*

"You want to be banished?" Bramblestar snarled at Squirrelpaw. "Her name is Gempaw."

"I'll get to that right away, Bramblestar." Brackenfur turned around and trotted off.

"So how's things with Bramblestar going?"

"Good, thanks!" Gempaw purred to Stormpaw, who seemed eager to listen to her.

"I thought I'd miss Squirrel..paw. But Blossomfall is cutting out to be a really cool mentor!" Stormpaw purred.

Before Gempaw could speak, a certain pale-gray she-cat passed by them both.

Stormpaw tilted his head.

"Did she take a dip in the lake?" Stormpaw whispered. "Her fur looks fluffy like she just got out of the lake recently!"

"And she licked her fur flat." Gempaw added. "And is there a reason why she keeps putting her tail to her belly?"

Dovewing took no heed of their comments and slightly bared her teeth when she saw Bumblestripe and Rosepetal conversing.

"So I ran the other way and caught the squirrel!" Rosepetal purred. "It fed the-"

Dovewing rudely sat down between the two cats.

"Hey, Bumblestripe. How are you?" Gempaw noticed her happy tone was painfully fake.

"Good, I was talking to Rosepetal though..." Bumblestripe muttered.

"Who?" Rosepetal gave a look of shock as if Dovewing had slapped her in the face. "Can we talk in private?"

"Uh, sure?" Bumblestripe walked past Dovewing and touched his nose to Rosepetal's ear. "See you later, Rose."

Dovewing's eyes flashed with anger before she looked away and

leaded Bumblestripe out of camp.

"What do you suppose they're talking about?" Stormpaw asked.

"Dovewing has acted very weird lately." Gempaw sighed. "Who knows."

Bramblestar took Gempaw on a border patrol across ShadowClan with Amberdrop and Thornclaw.

"There's a lot of young she-cats." Thornclaw muttered. "I'm a little dismayed that Cinderheart is the only one in the Nursery."

"Well, you know." Bramblestar sighed. "They want to take their relationships slow."

"No kidding." Thornclaw snorted. "I'm *this* close to telling Blossomfall how it is!"

"You two mates?" Amberdrop asked.

"No, but we will be." Thornclaw growled. "Or if things don't work out, I'm sure Daisy is desperate. No mating since the flood must be driving her nuts."

"Hey now." Bramblestar muttered. "Don't say that about Daisy."

"You kidding?" Thornclaw snapped. "She's mated with Firestar, Graystripe, Smoky till the Great Battle happened, probably some of the Dark Forest toms, Crowfeather, Onestar, Reedwhisker, Purdy, most of the ShadowClan elders, Lionblaze before him and Cinderheart reconciled, and Brackenfur and Dustpelt after their mates died!"

"*What* with *what* now?" Bramblestar stammered. "Where did you get *that* information?!"

"Hawkfrost shared the mating histories of the Clan with me when I used to be in the Dark Forest." Thornclaw explained. "You mated with-"

"Stop while your ahead, son." Bramblestar growled. "But how did

Daisy mate with Dark Forest toms? And how Brackenfur and Dustpelt? I thought they loved their mates!"

"Daisy kept crying to Blossomfall that she needed to mate, so she lead her to the Dark Forest." Thornclaw answered. "And for Brackenfur and Dustpelt, she forced them."

"La la la la, I can't hear you!" Amberdrop said loudly.

"Please, stop." Gempaw growled at Thornclaw. "You're grossing us out!"

"Fine, whatever." Thornclaw finally stopped talking the whole patrol.

Night fell over ThunderClan as some of the Clan cats were still up talking and eating.

After Bramblestar shared a thrush with Gempaw. He spotted Graystripe sharing tongues with Millie.

Bramblestar smirked. He had an idea.

"Hey, Graystripe! Can I see you for a minute?" Bramblestar called.

Graystripe padded over to him.

"Yes, what is it?" Graystripe asked.

"Cinderheart is the only she-cat in the Nursery." Bramblestar growled. "You already told me that Millie and your kitting days are over, but we *need* more cats in the Clan."

"I'm an elder though." Graystripe yawned. "I'm sure a she-cat will come around soon enough."

"I can't rely on that, Graystripe!" Bramblestar snapped. "You and Millie better have kits."

"If you keep harassing me, I'm telling the rest of the Clan!" Graystripe growled.

"Oh, well. A little birdie told me you mated with Daisy." Bramblestar sneered. Graystripe's fur went on end.

"Who?!" Graystripe gasped. "I mean-I didn't!"

"Sure..." Bramblestar growled. "When did you mate with Daisy?"

"I..uh.." Graystripe stammered, than sighed. "While Millie and Briarkit were in the old Twoleg nest with greencough."

"I won't share this with Millie and the rest of the Clan if you convince her to have more kits with you." Bramblestar explained.

"But what if she refuses?!" Graystripe cried.

Bramblestar walked closer to Graystripe till he felt Graystripe's breathing.

"Make her." Bramblestar snarled before walking away.

Before Gempaw went to join Bramblestar in their den, she heard a slight buzz sound. Her ears perked as she turned around and saw a patch of ice.

Ice? But it's not even-

Before Gempaw finished her thought, a silver beetle started walking on the ice.

Gempaw's eyes were stuck on the glittering bug till a gust of wind took it away.

She walked into Bramblestar's den.

What was that? Was that an omen?

Let Sleeping Tigers Lie

[image]

Bluestar lashed her tail angrily as she walked in front of the three cats she brought with her.

"ThunderClan will fall." Bluestar snarled.

"Only because you're going to harm them!" a she-cat cried.

"Shut up, Honeyleaf!" Bluestar snapped. "Hollyleaf, how do we get rid of Jessy and force-I mean, set Bramblestar and Squirrelflight back together?"

*"We don't." Hollyleaf hissed. "Don't you see Bramblestar is happy with Gempaw?! We both hate Squirrel*paw*!"*

"She's your mother!" the tom next to her snapped. "And my daughter, and her name is Squirrelflight!"

"And we all know that Firestar's family must *survive, the rest of those mouse-hearts are fair game."*

"Keep Graystripe alive please." Firestar meowed.

"NO! Bramblestar's forcing him and Millie to have more kits!" Bluestar roared.

"STOP IT!" Honeyleaf wailed. "Doing this will only hurt ThunderClan! Isn't it better if Squirrelpaw suffers than if the Clan suffers?!"

"But Bramblestar and Squirrelflight's kits were destined to save all the Clans!" Bluestar snapped.

"They were?!" Honeyleaf gasped.

"I knew my kin would be in another prophecy!" Firestar giggled.

"I don't believe you." Hollyleaf muttered.

"Because you don't *want Squirrelflight to be happy!" Bluestar growled. "LIONHEART! Tell as many StarClan cats that their kits were meant to be in a prophecy!"*

"Yes, Bluestar." Lionheart ran off.

Hollyleaf leaped to follow him, but Bluestar slammed her head into Hollyleaf's, making her fall back.

"NO YOU DON'T!" Bluestar roared. "Firestar! Take her away!"

Firestar snarled and leaped at Hollyleaf. Bluestar walked away and smirked as she heard Hollyleaf yelp.

That prophecy thing was a lie! *Bluestar thought to herself, smiling.* Now all of StarClan will listen to me!

"All ThunderClan cats that can catch their own prey, come here!"

Bramblestar's smirked as he saw Squirrelpaw exit the apprentice's den.

"Of course, Squirrel*paw* can't because her mouth's tied up." Bramblestar purred.

Squirrelpaw tried to growl, but she couldn't. Bramblestar wanted a break from her snarling and whining, so he decided that her mouth would be tied up till her punishment was lifted, it was only removed for when she needed to eat, drink, or hunt.

"LAUGH, MOUSE-BRAINS!" Bramblestar roared. The Clan let out forced laughs except Sandstorm and Leafpool.

"Blossomfall, Berrynose. Take her back into the apprentice's den. She'll be going out on two more patrols as soon as the announcements are over." Bramblestar ordered.

Leafpool jumped and landed next to Bramblestar, her fur bristling.

"YOU CAN'T DO THIS!" Leafpool wailed. "LOOK AT HER! She's wearing thin! Her fur's *clinging* to her bones because's she's been eating so little!"

"Millie, Snowlight." Bramblestar growled. "Confine her in the apprentice's den. Thornclaw, search for plants to tie Leafpool's mouth with."

Lionblaze opened his mouth.

"WANT TO BECOME LION*PAW*, HUH?!" Bramblestar bellowed. "SIT *DOWN!"*

Lionblaze's eyes flashed with horror, but he sat down.

"Any-who!" Bramblestar purred cheerfully like nothing had happened. "Dovewing, would you care to share?"

Dovewing stood next to Bramblestar.

"I'm expecting Bumblestripe's kits." Dovewing stuttered almost each word.

Bumblestripe purred and the Clan cheered.

Gempaw looked and saw Rosepetal wasn't cheering.

Poor Rosepetal. She doesn't know Dovewing's such a rotten two-timer. I should talk to her.

"And *Graystripe."* Bramblestar growled, but still kept his smile. "I'm sure *you* have something to share!"

"Actually, I don't." Graystripe looked horrified.

"OK!" Bramblestar meowed. "May I talk to you, privately?"

"Anything you can say to me you can share with the Clan!" Graystripe snapped.

"DISMISSED!" Bramblestar called.

Bramblestar ran to Gempaw's side.

"Hunting patrol?" Bramblestar touched his nose to Gempaw's.

"Sure." Gempaw sighed. Bramblestar entwined his tail with

Gempaw's.

"What's wrong?" Bramblestar asked softly.

"You're scaring me." Gempaw whimpered. "You've yelled at Squirrelflight and all her loved ones because of me!"

"No, it's because I've had bad history with her, Gempaw." Bramblestar explained. "Let's go."

After the patrol, Bramblestar saw Graystripe laying on a rock, basking in the sunset.

Bad mistake!

Bramblestar lunged, ready for blood.

"The Gathering is tonight!"

Bramblestar announced, Gempaw walked out and gasped.

Jayfeather was treating Graystripe, he looked like a messed-up hunk of meat breathing faintly.

"WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM?!" Millie wailed as she ran to his side. "I'M EXPECTING HIS KITS!"

Bramblestar's fur stood on end.

"Whoops." he whispered. Gempaw looked at her mate in horror.

"Oh, yes! A fox attacked him! Isn't that right, Graystripe?" Bramblestar purred.

Graystripe nodded weakly, resulting in blood spurting from his sliced neck. Gempaw flinched.

"Me, Thornclaw, Ivypool, Amberdrop, Snowlight, Dewshade, Blossomfall, Jayfeather, Stormpaw, and Gempaw will go." Bramblestar flicked his tail. "Let's go!"

Gempaw stood by Amberdrop and Ivypool as they chatted on the way to the Gathering.

"Do you two really think it was a fox?" Gempaw blurted out.

Ivypool's tail fell on Gempaw's shoulders.

"I'm sure whatever it was, we'll find it." Ivypool said soothingly. "So, Amberdrop-"

Gempaw's heart dropped.

She didn't answer my question!

"Gempaw goes first!"

Is what Bramblestar growled when Jayfeather tried to get on the tree-bridge.

"Your mother goes first, Jayfeather." Bramblestar repeated more softer.

"Funny, cause my mother's actually back at camp! You know, her mouth tied up and-

"SHUT UP AND LET HER PASS!" Bramblestar snarled.

Gempaw crossed the bridge and landed on the other side.

She smelled the scents of many Clans. She smiled as she saw her friends from other Clans, like Featherpaw and Grasspaw. She froze.

She saw the same brown tom that was with Dovewing.

Time for some answers

Gempaw swallowed her fear and approached him.

"What were you doing with Dovewing?!" Gempaw snapped.

The brown tom whirled around to face her. His eyes flickering with so many emotions that it was hard to tell what he was thinking.

He knows! Those kits must be his!

Gempaw only faintly registered the tom's gleaming fangs before he

lunged.

Bramblestar's Sudden News

[image]

Gempaw gasped when the brown tom tackled her out of sight of the other Clans. She unsheathed her claws and swiped the brown tom's nose. He fell back and got back up.

"Where did you see us?!" he snarled. "Where?!"

"I'm not telling! But if I see you two with each other again, I'm telling Bramblestar!" Gempaw growled.

"Don't." the tom's eyes were pleading now. "Rowanstar would never forgive me."

"Should've thought about that!" Gempaw growled. "Who even are you?!"

"Tigerheart." the tom hissed. "Tawnypelt's son."

"You're-"

"Related to Bramblestar, yes." Tigerheart growled. He walked away.

Gempaw returned to the crowd of cats. Bramblestar rushed to her side.

"Are you OK?" Bramblestar purred. "I saw you were missing for a bit."

"I'm fine, thanks." Gempaw meowed. *Does he need to know where I am all the time?*

"Let the Gathering start!" Rowanstar yowled.

All the cats gathered. Gempaw turned around and her mouth hung open.

Behind the bushes were Squirrelflight and Leafpool, being lead by

Bumblestripe and Rosepetal.

Bramblestar looked at them and smirked. No one else noticed.

What does he plan on doing?

"ShadowClan is doing great." Rowanstar purred. "Dawnpelt's kits have been born, Flamekit and Pinekit."

"WindClan is also doing well." Onestar added. "Sedgewhisker's kits have become apprentices. Barkpaw, Skypaw, and Littlepaw have been apprenticed to Gorsetail, Larkwing, and Breezepelt respectively."

"Barkpaw! Skypaw! Littlepaw!" the Clans chanted.

"Heathertail has also moved into the Nursery and we now have three new warriors among us. Featherwisp, Hootcall, and Oatnose!"

"Featherwisp! Hootcall! Oatnose!" the Clans cheered.

"RiverClan could not be better." Mistystar's eyes were gleaming. "Icewing's kits were born: Hailkit and Oakkit. They've joined Petalfur's litter: Turtlekit, Softkit, and Frogkit

Gempaw almost flinched.

The Clans are getting bigger! I hope they don't ask for more territory!

"Dovewing has moved to the Nursery alongside Millie. Cinderheart's kits's are also really healthy." Bramblestar said. "And I am about to hold a ceremony for one special she-cat in front of all the Clans!"

The Clans gasped.

"Is it a warrior ceremony?"

"But no one's ever done it during a Gathering!"

"You sure?"

"Silence." Bramblestar's eye twitched. "Gempaw, step forward."

I've only been training for five moons!

Gempaw's eyes quickly darted toward Squirrelflight. Her eyes were wild with outrage.

Leafpool's eyes were only ones of sorrow.

I'm so sorry

Gempaw felt the ground try to pull her and her paws felt heavier as she walked to the tree where the leaders were at. Rowanstar and Onestar narrowed their eyes at her, while Mistystar looked away. Bramblestar leaped off his branch and touched his nose to Gempaw's.

"Gempaw, will you follow the warrior code for as long as you live?" Bramblestar asked.

"I do." Gempaw was surprised she didn't stutter.

"Wonderful. From now on you will be Gemlight." Bramblestar purred. "ThunderClan needs a new deputy since Squirrelflight willingly stepped down and Leafpool also stepped down as medicine cat."

"Of course." Crowfeather sneered.

Shock and horror sparked in the two she-cats eyes and they tried to rip off the plants tying their mouths. Bumblestripe slapped them both.

"Gemlight, will you be ThunderClan's deputy?" Bramblestar asked.

Gemlight felt the world get smaller and press closer. Her fur bristled and her mouth was open.

Bramblestar just stripped Sandstorm's kits of everything they had and he's giving it to me! I don't deserve this, and neither does Squirrelflight and Leafpool!

"Please." Bramblestar pleaded softly. "I know you'll make a great deputy."

"What?! So any cat you're doing get's to be deputy?!" Jayfeather snarled. He got up and lashed his tail for effect.

"DON'T YOU DARE SAY THAT!" Bramblestar roared. Mistystar almost fell off her branch.

"ThunderClan's got some serious problems." Harespring muttered to Tigerheart.

"Uh, sure." Tigerheart looked at his paws.

"So what will it be?" Bramblestar asked again.

"I'll be deputy." Gemlight answered. "I will."

The Clans roared in outrage.

"How could he do this?!"

"She hasn't even had an apprentice!"

"She wasn't even a warrior before she got here!"

"We're leaving!" Bramblestar flicked his tail and his cats followed him.

No cats spoke to Gemlight on the way back, only letting her ahead of them and acknowledging her with a flick of a tail.

"Bumblestripe, Rosepetal. Stop." Bramblestar ordered. "Leave these she-cats with me. Gemlight, lead the Clan back to camp please."

Gemlight looked at Bramblestar warily before looking away and taking the lead back.

Dear StarClan, what's happening?

Gemlight and the ThunderClan cats following her were out of sight and earshot.

Bramblestar shoved Squirrelflight into the brambles. He then ripped the plants off Leafpool's mouth.

"HOW COULD YOU?!" Leafpool roared. "YOU-"

Bramblestar leaped at Leafpool quickly like an arrow. He sent a claw across Leafpool's belly and sent a few blows to her head.

Leafpool fell into a pool of her own blood, losing consciousness.

"Squ...Squirrelfl-"

Bramblestar snapped Leafpool's neck before she could tell her dying words.

Leafpool was dead.

Squirrelflight was a bloody mess from struggling in the brambles. Bramblestar ripped the plants off her mouth as well.

"What?" Squirrelflight rasped. "You going to kill me too?"

"No, you'd be getting off easy." Bramblestar snarled. "You're banned from ThunderClan. Any patrol sees you, you will be *killed. GET OUT!"*

Bramblestar shoved Squirrelflight out of the brambles and she limped away. Bramblestar smirked.

I bet a whole rabbit she won't even survive the night!

The Heavy Hearts in the Storm

[image]

A small gray tabby tom stretched and woke up the sunrise after the Clan Gathering.

He'd normally think something like "What a great day!" or "The weather sure is lovely out!"

But not today, he felt as dark as the clouds hovering the leaf-fall scenery over ThunderClan camp.

He loved Gemlight, but she loved Bramblestar! Bramblestar of all cats!

I was there with her, I wanted to be her mate, I-

"Stormpaw!"

The gray tabby tom turned around and saw his mentor Blossomfall.

"It's time for the dawn patrol!" Blossomfall purred.

"Oh." Stormpaw smiled, dying inside. "Great!"

"You can set up the patrols, Gemlight."

"Do I need any advice?" Gemlight felt put on the spot, this was only her first sunrise as *deputy!*

"Just don't put too much pressure on one cat." Bramblestar yawned. "Try not to send one on more than one patrol if they're tired."

"OK." Gemlight saw Blossomfall and her apprentice Stormpaw waiting towards the camp's exit. She walked to them.

Bramblestar smiled as he stared at Gemlight's rump.

She's going to have my kits soon enough!

"Bramblestar?"

"Oh! Yes, Millie?" Bramblestar turned away and looked at the she-cat. "You back from Graystripe's vigil?"

"Yes, Sandstorm seems sad. Having to help bury Graystripe so soon after burying Purdy." Millie looked back up at Bramblestar. "May I talk to you privately?"

"Certainly." Bramblestar got up. "Let's go toward the WindClan border."

Bramblestar and Millie walked away from camp.

"Was there something you wish to tell me?" Bramblestar asked. "If it's about how Graystripe died, I *insist* it was a fox."

"I stopped loving Graystripe long before the fox attacked him." Millie confessed.

She then pointed at her belly with her tail.

"*They're* not his kits." Millie added. "They're from a tom in WindClan. They're Crowfeather's."

"Crowfeather's?" Bramblestar looked at Millie strangely. "Huh."

"I didn't want anyone to know." Millie looked down. "Graystripe was *sobbing* before he died. He knew that they weren't his kits because we stopped mating moons ago!"

"I won't tell anyone." Bramblestar meowed. "We need more kits anyway."

"Thank you!" Millie touched her nose to Bramblestar's shoulder and ran off. "*Finally!* My new litter will be nice *and* healthy!"

Bramblestar sat down and smiled, taking in the view of the forest.

So will my kits, mine and Gemlight's!

Gemlight had ordered the dawn patrol out and sent a border patrol

toward the ShadowClan border.

"I want to join the border patrol." Dovewing insisted.

"Dovewing, you're expecting kits!" Gemlight looked at Dovewing sympathetically. "I'm sure every queen wants to hunt while they're expecting kits, but you have to care about your-"

"I don't care about my kits!" Dovewing snarled with hatred.

"What?"

Gemlight held back a smirk, while Dovewing held back a scream.

It was Bumblestripe.

"How can you not care about our kits?" Bumblestripe whimpered. "I thought you *loved* me."

"I do!" Dovewing lied and put back on her fake smile. "I was just reenacting Millie and her feelings toward Blossomfall and *you*!"

"Well, that's not really nice either." Bumblestripe narrowed his eyes at Dovewing. "My dad is *dead*, and you should me comforting me. Not *making fun* of my mother."

Gemlight knew the conversation was going nowhere, so she decided to visit the Nursery.

Cinderheart was by herself, her head down.

"Cinderheart, where are the kits?" Gemlight asked.

"Sandstorm's?" Cinderheart growled, lifting her head and glaring at Gemlight.

Gemlight flinched.

How could I have not noticed their absence?!

"I meant your kits." Gemlight sighed.

"They're with Lionblaze." Cinderheart whispered. "Sorry for

snapping at you, sit down beside me please."

Gemlight nodded and sat down.

"Do you know where Squirrelflight and Leafpool are at?" Cinderheart asked Gemlight.

"I'm sorry. I do not." Gemlight sighed. "I would love to know why they disappeared so quickly."

"I fear the worst." Cinderheart whispered. "Did you happen to leave them alone with Bramblestar?"

Gemlight's whole body went cold.

"I-I, did!" Gemlight gasped. "You don't think-"

"I do, actually." Cinderheart sighed. "At this point, I believe Bramblestar is willing to do anything to keep you safe and happy. Even if it means taking the lives of others."

Gemlight felt hurt.

That must have been what happened to Graystripe!

"I'm sorry you had to hear this when it was too late." Cinderheart rested her tail on Gemlight's shoulders.

"It can't be!" Gemlight cried. "Maybe they were just banished!"

"I would find that unlikely." Cinderheart assured her. "Go visit the kits, it might make you feel better."

Gemlight nodded numbly and exited the Nursery.

Gemlight left the Nursery and felt a strong force pin her.

It was Lionblaze, he was shaking.

"MURDERER!" Lionblaze roared. "MY MOTHER IS DEAD!"

"Gemlight killed our grandmother?!" Fernkit cried.

"Isn't *Gemlight* our grandmother?" Sorrelkit asked.

"She isn't!" Lionblaze said to his kits. "Go back to your mother, now!"

The three she-kits squeaked and darted to the Nursery. Lionblaze turned to the crowd that had collected in the camp's clearing.

"Look at this fox-heart!" Lionblaze howled. "She's killed Squirrelflight and Leafpool!"

"I didn't!" Gemlight snapped. "I leaded the patrol back to camp! Ivypool! You were there!"

Ivypool kept quiet.

"SAVE ME!" Gemlight wailed. Lionblaze unsheathed his claws.

"SHUT YOUR MOUTH!" Lionblaze growled. His pupils turned to dots and he gasped.

Gemlight panicked.

Is he choking?!

She looked around him.

Bramblestar had his claws down Lionblaze's neck.

"DON'T KILL HIM!" Gemlight begged. She cried in horror and rolled out of Lionblaze's grip.

Lionblaze started hyperventilating and Bramblestar let go. He than started convulsing.

"JAYFEATHER!" Ivypool wailed.

"Leave him." Bramblestar growled at Ivypool.

She opened her mouth.

"I SAID *LEAVE HIM!*" Bramblestar repeated. "He's having a heart attack, he won't live."

Jayfeather looked horrified to move, simply staring at his dead brother from the medicine cat's den.

"For the record, I did NOT kill him." Bramblestar growled. "His heart killed him. Gemlight, let's go into my den. Cinderheart, Jayfeather, go help Sandstorm bury him."

Gemlight followed, leaving the shocked Clan behind.

Deputy, Queen, or Both?

[image]

Gemlight returned to the den with Bramblestar. He had a flirtatious smirk on his face.

How could he be like that minutes after he killed Lionblaze?!

"So, you're a warrior now..." Bramblestar eyes were clouded with lust. "We can make our love official now..."

"Not after you killed Lionblaze. I'm not going to let some tom drop down on me as I think of all the cats he has *killed.*" Gemlight growled.

"Lionblaze's heart killed him, Gemlight!" Bramblestar snapped. "I haven't killed any cats!"

"Don't think I don't know about what happened to Graystripe, Squirrelflight, or Leafpool!" Gemlight whispered.

"I didn't kill them." Bramblestar insisted. "Graystripe was killed by a fox, and I banished Squirrelflight and Leafpool."

"You *banished* them?!" Gemlight gasped. "They didn't *do* anything!"

"You know very well that Squirrelflight wasn't going to let you leave this Clan *alive.*" Bramblestar growled. "I was trying to *protect* you."

Gemlight looked down.

"I'm going outside camp to think about it." Gemlight said. "I wish to be alone for a while."

"Of course." Bramblestar stepped out of the way. Gemlight walked out.

Bramblestar watched as Gemlight walked out of the camp with her

tail hanging low.

If she is to expect my kits willingly, I must stop killing for now.

That's the same thing I thought with Goldenflower...

Who are you?!

Your father. I have to say, you're finally COMING AROUND

Bramblestar froze in horror as Tigerstar yelled the last two words.

He watched as Sandstorm threw her head back and yowled near Lionblaze's body.

*COMING AROUND, COMING AROUND, BECOMING **ME***

"SHUT UP!" Bramblestar cried. He ran out of his den to comfort Sandstorm.

"Get *away* from me!" Sandstorm wailed. "YOU *MONSTER!"*

Bramblestar jumped away.

"I'm your leader, Sandstorm." Bramblestar growled. "I would never kill a cat intentionally."

YOU CAN'T DO THIS!

Bramblestar recognized Leafpool's desperate cry and closed his eyes.

You deserved to die, I didn't do anything wrong.

YES YOU DID, YOU KILLED ME!

Bramblestar fell silent and saw Cinderheart crying.

"Mother, why isn't Lionblaze waking up?!" Fernkit cried.

"He's..." Hollykit looked on in horror and Sorrelkit broke down crying.

"It's just like Brokenstar." Hollykit whispered. "We're going to die."

"NO, you're not!" Bramblestar ran and curled his tail around the kits. "Lionblaze got really scared of me and died."

"That...doesn't make any sense!" Sorrelkit cried.

"Why should he be scared of you?" Hollykit asked boldly.

"Because he was in the wrong, he was going to harm my mate." Bramblestar assured them.

"But now we don't have a dad!" Fernkit wailed.

"Come here, little kits." Cinderheart's eyes were red. "Stay with Millie and Dovewing while I go put your Dad somewhere where he could rest in peace."

"Bury him?!" Sorrelkit barely finished her sentence before falling and crying on Hollykit's shoulder.

Cinderheart got up and left.

Bramblestar saw the kits, their once happy and eager faces traumatized and twisted from the death they had witnessed.

I don't deserve to live. I killed many cats

But I don't want to leave Gemlight...

Bramblestar's paws felt heavy as he walked away from the scene.

He walked into his den and fell pathetically on the ground.

Gemlight had caught a mouse and a sparrow to help her mind off the horrific events. She knew she had to go back.

She couldn't leave her place as deputy.

Gemlight took her prey and trotted back. She looked and saw Cinderheart, Jayfeather, and Sandstorm dragging Lionblaze's body along the dirt.

This would've never happened if I left.

"Gemlight?"

"Stormpaw?" Gemlight turn around and saw the tabby. "What're you doing here?"

"I meant to ask...if there was a patrol I could go on?" Stormpaw looked at Gemlight shyly.

"Sure, just let me bring my fresh-kill back to camp." Gemlight replied.

"May I walk along with you?" Stormpaw asked, looking even more nervous.

"Of course." Gemlight looked down.

For Stormpaw the silence was awkward, for Gemlight it was threatening her with guilty thoughts.

*You've destroyed the Clan, you ripped Bramblestar of his sanity, you killed **them***

"Do you not want to be with Bramblestar?" Stormpaw asked softly. "I'll make sure that he doesn't pressure you if he is."

"NO!" Gemlight gasped. "Sorry. I just don't want to associate myself with him now."

"Taking a break, I understand." Stormpaw replied. "This must be hard on you more than anybody."

Gemlight nodded. And he spoke kind words to her the way back.

"SQUIRRELFLIGHT NEEDS TO RETURN TO THUNDERCLAN!"

Chaos was breaking out in StarClan. All because of Bluestar and Lionheart.

Leafpool and Graystripe saw as Hollyleaf leaded Lionblaze to the entrance of StarClan camp.

"Welcome to StarClan, Lionblaze." Graystripe rubbed Lionblaze's

shoulder with his paw. "I'm sorry you died before your kits became apprentices."

"Don't remind me." Lionblaze growled. "I *HATE* HIM!"

"Son, calm down." Leafpool whispered. "We all do."

"HE CAN'T CALM DOWN!" Bluestar growled. "NOT WHEN THERE'S A PROPHECY TO FULFILL!"

"Lionblaze deserved to die!" Ashfur growled. "Jayfeather is next!"

"I don't think you should be leader of this huge Clan." Hollyleaf growled at Bluestar. "I *challenge* you for the spot!"

The majority of StarClan gasped.

"So be it." Bluestar stepped from her place and growled. "Lionheart, start the match!"

"Winner is the cat knocked out!" Lionheart yelled. "FIGHT!"

Bluestar leaped at Hollyleaf without a second to spare. Hollyleaf dodged it and clawed her ears.

"SCUM!" Bluestar roared. "YOU'LL NEVER RULE!"

"Sorry, Bluestar. BUT THIS IS FOR THUNDERCLAN!" Hollyleaf slammed Bluestar to the ground and raked her throat open. The Clan gasped at the sight of Bluestar's corpse.

The battle was over as soon as it started.

Hollyleaf bared her fangs and lifted her head to StarClan's cats.

"YOU ALL LISTEN TO *ME!*" Hollyleaf growled. "WE ARE GOING TO PROTECT THUNDERCLAN!"

The Squirrel Takes Flight

[image]

A familiar orange she-cat crawled past RiverClan territory and laid down on the half-bridge, her blood-bathed body rising and falling.

A mouse looked into her eyes and she bared her teeth, her paws too weak to lash out at the small rodent.

The mouse tauntingly groomed his paws before dashing away from the cat, Squirrelflight.

Squirrelflight had cuts everywhere, her front right paw was cut and her left ear was torn clean off by the fierce brambles.

She closed her eyes and the tears from them fell into the cuts on her face. She licked the sharp red cut on her rosy pink nose and winced. More tears came just from feeling the pain.

I had it all, I was deputy. Even though I could never expect kits, I was at my highest as deputy. Maybe I could've stayed as deputy if I wasn't so fierce to Jessy...no, he hated me and saw me as a threat to his and Jessy's relationship, if I hadn't gotten in trouble for accusing Jessy, I would have gotten in trouble for something else. Bramblestar would have made sure of that.

The moon stretched over Squirrelflight and bathed her in a soft light as she laid across the half-bridge.

Which is why Bramblestar has to be punished, along with his little scamp deputy and mate!

The hatred was returning to her gaze and she unsheathed her claws.

I'm coming for you BOTH

The sun stretched over the half-bridge where flies jumped on Squirrelflight's body. She growled and shook them off before realizing two important things.

One, she didn't know where she was going to go.

Next was that a RiverClan patrol was heading her way.

"I'm proud of your kits, they're all healthy!" Heronwing purred to Mallownose.

"Now I'm a mentor *and* a father!" Mallownose raised his head high.

Squirrelflight's eye twitched.

Ugh, he's like the RiverClan's Berrynose!

"Intruder at the half-bridge, Mallownose!" Havenpaw growled.

Squirrelflight bared her yellow teeth at the three cats and her limbs shook.

"*Look!* She's weak!" Heronwing snarled with a smile. The three of them stopped sprinting.

Squirrelflight growled and limped away from the half-bridge.

Mallownose leaped in front of her.

"Not so fast." Mallownose hissed in her only ear. "I haven't had a little...*action* since Petalfur moved into the Nursery."

Squirrelflight gasped and shoved Mallownose into the nearby lake, she sprinted away like she had no injuries whatsoever.

She didn't look back at Heronwing and Havenpaw, but she heard no pawsteps. She ran into ShadowClan territory.

She zoomed past any possible patrol and zoomed into the same Twolegplace where the kittypets were fought off.

They may take me in, twolegs might.

"STOP!"

Squirrelflight saw a ginger she-cat and a silver tabby tom jump from the fence above and circle her.

"Are you one of those Clan cats?!" the ginger she-cat snarled. "She looks like one, right O'Hara?"

"Yes, Scarlet. She *does."* the silver tabby glared at Squirrelflight. "CATS!"

Squirrelflight flinched as she heard sprinting behind all the fences. Dozens of kittypets leaped from the fences and surrounded any possible chance of escape.

"ZIGGY!" O'hara growled. "WE FOUND ONE!"

A fierce ginger and white tom jumped off the fence and ran to Squirrelflight, his teeth bared. His glare slightly faltered and he started checking Squirrelflight out.

Squirrelflight jumped back and growl.

"Hey, if don't want me to kill you, you will let me do whatever I *want,* got that?" Ziggy snarled and Squirrelflight nodded. "Good. Now tell me why you're here."

"I was a rogue passing through Clan territory." Squirrelflight lied. "And when I passed through, several of them attacked me! Can you believe that?!"

"Yes." Ziggy muttered. "They're quite heartless, what is your name?"

Squirrelflight hesitated, she knew if she gave her real name, they'd know she was a Clan cat.

"Squirrel." Squirrelflight said. "My name is Squirrel."

"Well, Squirrel." O'hara growled. "We hate the Clans, and you promise you're not a Clan cat?"

"I promise, the scars prove so." Squirrel meowed. "I need somewhere to stay, and I need these scratches healed. Can one of you take me in?"

"I will."

Squirrel turned around and saw a dark gray she-cat with amber eyes.

"My name is Jocelyn." the cat gave a warm smile. "My twolegs are very friendly, and will be more than happy to take you in."

"Thank you." Squirrel started crying and she padded to Jocelyn and rubbed her head on her shoulder. "You don't know how much this means to me."

"It is no problem at all." Jocelyn purred. "Come along now, they'll need to take you to the Vet before it gets dark."

Squirrel followed Jocelyn over the fence. The two she-cats went around the twoleg nest till they reached the other side. Squirrel and Jocelyn climbed the steps till they reached a brown tree-like thing.

"This is a door." Jocelyn explained. "That thing below is the cat-flap, it lets me in after I've had enough outside and I'm ready to eat."

Jocelyn and Squirrel went inside and Squirrel saw a huge expansion of things she didn't even know what they were.

"HELLO?!" Jocelyn yelled.

A male and female twoleg walked through the tall opening and gasped when they saw Squirrel's bloody body.

"Don't panic, but they're going to put you in a crate to take you to the Vet." Jocelyn touched Squrrel's nose before she trotted up more steps.

"WHAT?!" Squirrel growled as the female twoleg picked her up.

I'm giving up all my dignity because of that fox-heart, Jessy!

Squirrel went limp and she was placed in the crate. She saw the ground disappear and sensed the crate she was locked in had lifted. She turned her back to the crate opening.

JESSY WILL PAY FOR THIS, AND BRAMBLESTAR WILL TOO

The Three Queens

[image]

Three moons later

Gemlight grabbed a pigeon and watched Millie's kits play, the serenity had finally seem to settle. It turned out the silver beetle on the ice meant what Millie would name her kits.

Icekit, was a white she-kit with blue eyes. Beetlekit was a jet black tom, and Silverkit as a light gray she-kit with green eyes and stripes on her fur.

Heh, Beetlekit looks like that WindClan tom!

The only thing that seemed to threaten the peace in ThunderClan was Harespring accusing ThunderClan of stealing catmint from their territory. Hootcry, a newly made WindClan warrior, told her it was because Harespring's son was dying.

"He had a son?!" Gemlight scoffed. "What she-cat would like a sourpuss like him?"

"You'd be surprised!" Hootcry purred. "Furzepelt had two toms a moon ago! Their names are Toadkit and Ryekit!"

"Which one is dying?" Gemlight asked.

"Ryekit, poor little tom." Hootcry ducked his head. "I should go talk to Harespring, see ya."

Gemlight looked from Millie's kits down to her own body. She remembered.

She was one moon pregnant.

Once Bramblestar found out, he made Cinderheart's kits all apprentices. Hollypaw was given Cloudtail, Sorrelpaw was given to Amberdrop, and Fernpaw chose the path of medicine cat apprentice

with Jayfeather mentoring her.

Bramblestar also made Stormpaw a warrior: Stormcloud.

Dovewing was due any sunrise now, Bumblestripe hunted in anticipation of the kits. Gemlight didn't dare breaking the hopes he had, she knew now the kits were Tigerheart's.

She even remembered the conversation between Tigerheart and Dovewing...

Gemlight sneaked out of camp, her plump belly brushing against the plants. It almost gave her away, but Tigerheart stood where he was.

Dovewing showed up as well, Tigerheart purred.

"I hate *Bumblestripe so much!" Dovewing growled. "You wouldn't believe what kind of names he wants for the kits!"*

"What would those be?" Tigerheart asked simply.

"Petalkit, Ripplekit, SOFTKIT!" Dovewing snarled. "Honestly, I would've never fell for him if I knew he was such a she-tom!"

"Well, mating with him is enough to cover up the fact they're my kits." Tigerheart replied. "But you're right, he is pathetic."

"Soon, they'll be yours." Dovewing smiled. "Bumblestripe will never have them."

Gemlight kept still on four paws, even though she felt her developing kits wiggle inside of her. A sharp kick inside her belly made her bump into the tree in front of her.

"Wha?" Dovewing looked in Gemlight's direction and unsheathed her claws.

"Gemlight!" Tigerheart growled. "I know you're expecting kits! You want harm to come their way?!"

"No future father would ever say that to a Queen." Gemlight growled, stepping out of her hiding spot. "Bumblestripe is being played for a fool, I

know another cat in ThunderClan loves him."

"Rosepetal?!" Dovewing scoffed. "She had a crush on Foxleap and Toadstep, she only wants Bumblestripe because those two are dead!"

"She's a real she-cat." Gemlight found herself defending a she-cat she only knew for a few moons. "Whatever you say, at least her heart's in the right place."

Gemlight unsheathed her claws.

"And so what if she had crushes in the past? Who doesn't?" Gemlight lashed her tail. "Get out, Tigerheart. You have your own Clan to take care of."

Gemlight walked away a few paces and turned to look at Dovewing.

"I'm your deputy." Gemlight growled. "You come back with me or Bumblestripe will know."

"Rosepetal, lead Ivypool, Poppyfrost, and Spiderleg on the border patrol near WindClan."

Bramblestar watched as Rosepetal looked at Bramblestar with delicate green eyes and nodded. She walked away silently.

"Mousewhisker." Bramblestar meowed.

Mousewhisker walked away from sharing tongues with Lilyheart. "Yes?"

"Make sure your sister eats today." Bramblestar ordered. "After fresh-kill is taken to the elders and queens, get the biggest piece left to take to her."

"Yes, Bramblestar." Mousewhisker replied, he dashed back over to Lilyheart's side.

They're still scared of me

"HELP!" a sharp voice cracked the brief silence in the camp.

Dovewing was having her kits.

"JAYFEATHER!" Bramblestar yelled.

Jayfeather appeared out of medicine cat's den and gave Fernpaw a few commands before disappearing into the Nursery. Jayfeather cast a glance at Gemlight before running into the Nursery.

"Where's Gemlight?" Bramblestar growled.

"Right here, Bramblestar." Gemlight sighed. "I already know, stay in your den."

"Dovewing!" Bumblestripe cried. He tried to push past Jayfeather.

"*Let me in!"* Bumblestripe growled.

"GET OUT!" Dovewing roared at Bumblestripe. Bumblestripe flinched and backed off.

"It's just hormones." Birchfall reassured Bumblestripe. "She'll be fine."

Gemlight unsheathed her claws and glared in the direction of the Nursery.

It's not hormones, she really hates him.

Hollypaw entered the den where Gemlight rested.

"What is it, Hollypaw?" Gemlight asked.

"We found a ShadowClan cat on our territory!" Hollypaw cried. "Me and Sorrelpaw did!"

Gemlight got up quickly, fear shooting up her whole body.

Tigerheart must've heard Dovewing's screams, what if she did that on purpose to call him?

"I'll send a patrol-"

"NO!" Hollypaw snapped. "You must go alone, he caught

Sorrelpaw!"

Gemlight lifted off the ground, and tripped and crawled out of camp. She saw Bramblestar send off more patrols of cats eager to leave the screaming fox-brain behind them.

He'll be fine without me, and Dovewing certainly will survive, that little cheat

Gemlight caught Hollypaw staring intently at her and Gemlight left to look for Tigerheart and Sorrelpaw.

She warily worked her way towards the ShadowClan and gave a puzzled look.

Where's Tigerheart?

Gemlight heard a sharp snarl behind her. She held back a scream and turned to see who it was.

It was a huge fox.

Conspiring Apprentices

[image]

"HELP!"

Gemlight was barely hanging on the tree as the fox lashed its fangs and attempted to climb and kill Gemlight. As she was hanging on tight, still screaming for help. She saw a tortoiseshell pelt flash through the trees.

Sorrelpaw.

What? I thought Tigerheart had her?

Sorrelpaw ran and Hollypaw appeared to her side, their eager eyes looking at Gemlight.

She realized she had been tricked, Hollypaw and Sorrelpaw had tried to kill her by bringing her to a fox while she was pregnant.

"YOU GET BACK HERE!" Gemlight roared. They snickered and ran off presumably back to camp.

"Gemlight!" a tom's voice cried. Stormcloud came into view and hissed at the fox.

Stormcloud leaped and slammed his paws down on the fox, the fox lashed and sliced Stormcloud's paw open with it's teeth and smacked him across the forest floor.

"STORMCLOUD!" Gemlight screeched.

Stormcloud got up and jumped on the fox's shoulders, tearing the fox's fur apart before the fox shook him off and ran away.

Gemlight dropped from the tree and slowly limped back with Stormcloud.

When they came back, Dovewing had a dark brown she-kit and a

light gray tom with black stripes at her belly. She looked at them with love.

She wouldn't do that if they were Bumblestripe's. Heck no, she'd think they were mistakes.

"Petalkit and Ripplekit." Bumblestripe purred. "Welcome to ThunderClan, where you will be raised as warriors."

Dovewing looked at Bumblestripe with hatred and back down to her kits, Bumblestripe didn't notice.

"Gemlight!" Bramblestar gasped. "Are you alright?!"

"She was attacked by a fox!" Stormcloud gasped.

"He saved me." Gemlight added. "Hollypaw and Sorrelpaw set it up to try and kill me!"

"HOLLYPAW! SORRELPAW!" Bramblestar roared. Gemlight immediately regretted saying that, knowing how Bramblestar punished Squirrelflight just for getting Gemlight into trouble.

Hollypaw and Sorrelpaw looked shocked that Gemlight had survived the encounter.

"Attention ThunderClan!" Bramblestar growled. "Hollypaw and Sorrelpaw have done a great crime and lead Gemlight to a fox in an attempt. They shall be banished!"

"DON'T BANISH US!" Sorrelpaw pleaded. "Gemlight lead us to the fox and we ran, leaving her behind!"

"Wait, Bramblestar!" Thornclaw meowed, then he smirked. "Let me take them out of camp, I have a *better* punishment."

"Very well." Bramblestar meowed. "You two, go with him and do what he says. I trust you have a proper punishment for these two."

"Oh, yes." Thornclaw's smile seemed more malicious. "You will be very content."

Hollypaw and Sorrelpaw looked confused and followed Thornclaw.

Gemlight was concerned, the moon was rising and Hollypaw and Sorrelpaw still haven't showed up.

What punishment lasts all day? He didn't kill them, did he?

She laid warily inside the Nursery. Millie, Dovewing, and their five kits were surprisingly asleep.

Hopefully more queens will expect kits soon, the other Clans seem to be getting bigger fast. Gemlight thought. *Mistystar even had FIVE kits last moon, and they were Bluekit, Stormkit, Firekit, Streamkit, and Mosskit. Two toms and three she-kits! Furzepelt had Toadkit and Ryekit! Two moons ago, Onestar revealed that Heathertail had Lionkit, Goldenkit, and Blazekit two moons ago. No doubt she was thinking of Lionblaze, StarClan knows who the father is. Turtlepaw, Softpaw, and Frogpaw have been apprenticed. And so have Flamepaw and Pinepaw! Grassfeather of ShadowClan is expecting Snaketail's kits, which is creepy because he's an elder.*

Gemlight's train of thought was interrupted by Hollypaw and Sorrelpaw appearing with a smirking Thornclaw behind them, they look torn and sweaty.

She didn't know what happened, but the way the two she-cats looked made her blood run cold.

Hollypaw and Sorrelpaw have been basically silent and have looked at Gemlight shyly ever since the night they came back. Gemlight apologized to them for, well nothing really, but there had to be some reason why they constantly looked traumatized.

They have been ignoring the fresh-kill pile even. Their sister Fernpaw even looked worried.

Bramblestar did not know either what had happened, whenever he suggested for them to see Jayfeather, they gasped and pleaded not to see him.

Gemlight was truly terrified, she even demanded Thornclaw tell her what he did.

"Something that'll keep them in line next time." Thornclaw smirked. "I'll have to say, it made me feel *real* good."

"Stop that." Gemlight shook. "Stop talking like that."

She retreated to the Nursery.

"Why do those two look scared?" Beetlekit asked his mother.

"That big tom took them to the forest!" Icekit replied.

"That doesn't mean anything though." Silverkit's eyes looked solemn. "Poor she-cats."

Gemlight got up and ran off, she couldn't listen to kits ponder about what she was trying to ignore. She left camp and spotted Tigerheart in the distance.

"Tigerheart." Gemlight growled softly. "Leave Dovewing and her kits alone."

"They're mine too." Tigerheart gave an angry look. "You already know they'll be raised to be ShadowClan cats."

"Not if I can't help it." Gemlight snarled. "Bumblestripe shouldn't lose *his* kits."

"THEY'RE MINE!" Tigerheart lashed her tail.

"Bumblestripe will be heartbroken!" Gemlight cried. "He left Rosepetal to be a proper father to someone else's kits!"

"That's his fault." Tigerheart said casually. "They'll be Eaglekit and Stripekit. Not pathetic names like Petalkit and Sappykit."

"IT'S RIPPLEKIT!" Gemlight snapped.

"Whatever." Tigerheart flicked his tail. "I don't care."

"I'm warning you." Gemlight turned around to walk away.

"Your warnings are as dangerous as mouse squeaks." Tigerheart scoffed. "Stay out of my else or else."

A quarter-moon later

Bramblestar called forward the Clan as they were preparing for the Gathering. Hollypaw and Sorrelpaw crawled slowly and looked at the whole crowd with teary eyes. Hollypaw sobbed on Sorrelpaw's shoulder and Sorrelpaw looked up at the whole Clan.

No, Thornclaw couldn't have. Gemlight's fur ruffled. *He could only have-*

"We're both expecting kits." Sorrelpaw choked.

Thorns in the Waves

[image]

Allegiances

ThunderClan
Leader: Bramblestar-dark tabby with amber eyes
Deputy: Gemlight-dark brown she-cat with brown eyes
Medicine Cats: Jayfeather-gray tabby tom with blind blue eyes
Apprentice, Fernpaw(dark grey she-cat)

Warriors
Brackenfur-golden brown tabby tom
Cloudtail-long-haired white tom with blue eyes
Apprentice, Hollypaw(black she-cat with amber eyes)
Brightheart-white she-cat with ginger patches
Spiderleg-long-limbed black tom with brown underbelly and blue eyes
Birchfall-light brown tabby tom
Whitewing-white she-cat with green eyes
Berrynose-cream-colored to m
Mousewhisker-gray and white tom
Rosepetal-dark cream she-cat
Poppyfrost-tortoiseshell she-cat
Briarlight-dark brown she-cat with sky-colored eyes, paralyzed in her hindquarters
Blossomfall-tortoiseshell and white she-cat
Bumblestripe-very pale gray tom with black stripes
Ivypool-gray and white tabby she-cat with blue eyes
Cherryfall-ginger she-cat
Molewhisker-brown and cream tom
Lilyheart-tortoiseshell and white she-cat
Amberdrop-pale ginger she-cat
Apprentice, Sorrelpaw(tortiseshell she-cat with green eyes)
Dewshade-gray and white tom
Snowlight-white, fluffy tom

Queens
Daisy-cream, long-furred cat from the horseplace
Millie-striped gray tabby she-cat with blue eyes(mother of Crowfeather's kits: Beetlekit, a jet black tom, Icekit, a white she-kit with blue eyes, and Silverkit, a gray tabby she-kit with green eyes. 1/2 moon old.)
Dovewing-pale gray she-cat with blue eyes(mother of Tigerheart's kits: Petalkit, a dark brown tabby she-kit, and Ripplekit, a light gray tabby tom with amber eyes. 1/4 moon old)
Gemlight-dark brown she-cat with brown eyes(expecting Bramblestar's kits. Due in 2 moons.)
Hollypaw-black she-cat with amber eyes(expecting Thornclaw's kits. Due in 3 moons.)
Sorrelpaw-tortoiseshell she-cat with green eyes(expecting Thornclaw's kits. Due in 3 moons)

Elders
Sandstorm-pale ginger she-cat with green eyes

ShadowClan
Leader: Rowanstar-ginger tom
Apprentice, Maplepaw(cream furred she-cat. Training for 1 moon)
Deputy: Crowfrost-black and white tom
Medicine Cat: Littlecloud-very small tabby tom
Apprentice, Milkpaw(white she-cat. Training for 1 moon)

Warriors
Tawnypelt-tortoiseshell she-cat
Apprentice, Lilypaw(light brown she-cat. Training for 1 moon)
Owlclaw-light brown tabby tom
Scorchfur-dark gray tom
Apprentice, Pinepaw(dark grey she-cat. Training for 1/2 moon)
Tigerheart-dark brown tabby tom
Dawnpelt-cream furred she-cat
Ferretclaw-black and gray tom
Spikeclaw-dark brown tom
Stoatfur-tortoiseshell and white she-cat
Apprentice, Flamepaw(orange tabby she-cat. Training for 1/2

moon)
Pouncetail-brown tabby tom
Snowbird-pure white she-cat
Pinenose-black she-cat

Queens
Grassfeather-light brown she-cat(expecting Snaketail's kits. Due in 1/4 moon)

Elders
Snaketail-dark brown tom with tabby-striped tail
Whitewater-white she-cat with long fur, blind in one eye
Ratscar-brown tom with long scar across his back
Oakfur-small brown tom
Smokefoot-black tom
Kinkfur-tabby she-cat with long fur that sticks out in all angles
Ivytail-black, white, and tortoiseshell she-cat

WindClan
Leader: Onestar-brown tabby tom
Deputy: Harespring-brown and white tom
Medicine Cats: Kestrelflight-mottled gray tom

Warriors
Crowfeather-dark grey tom
Featherwisp-gray tabby she-cat
Nightcloud-black she-cat
Hootcall-dark gray tom
Gorsetail-very pale gray and white she-cat with blue eyes
Apprentice, Barkpaw(dark brown tabby tom. Training for 4 moons)
Weaselfur-ginger tom with white paws
Leaftail-dark tabby tom, amber eyes
Oatnose-pale brown tabby tom
Emberfoot-gray tom with two dark paws
Breezepelt-black tom with amber eyes
Apprentice, Littlepaw(pale gray tom with blue eyes. Training for 4 moons)
Crouchfoot-ginger tom
Larkwing-pale brown tabby she-cat
Apprentice, Skypaw(light gray she-cat with brown paws.

Training for 4 moons)
Sedgewhisker-light brown tabby she-cat

Queens
Furzepelt-gray and white she-cat(mother of Harespring's kits: Toadkit, a dark brown tabby tom, and Ryekit, a light brown tom. 2 moons old)
Heathertail-light brown tabby she-cat with blue eyes(mother of ?'s kits: Lionkit, a orange tabby tom, Goldenkit, a cream colored she-kit, and Blazekit, a white kit with orange splotches. 1 moon old)

Elders
Whiskernose-light brown tom
Whitetail-small white she-cat

RiverClan
Leader: Mistystar-gray she-cat with blue eyes
Deputy: Reedwhisker-black tom
Medicine Cat: Willowshine-gray tabby she-cat

Warriors
Mintfur-light gray tabby tom
Apprentice, Softpaw(white she-cat with orange spotches. Training for 2 moons)
Minnowtail-dark gray she-cat
Mallownose-light brown tabby tom
Perchtalon-gray and white she-cat
Shimmerpelt-silver she-cat
Apprentice, Turtlepaw(dark brown tabby tom. Training for 2 moons)
Lakeheart-gray tabby she-cat
Heronwing-dark gray and black tom
Petalfur-gray and white she-cat
Duskfur-brown tabby she-cat
Apprentice, Frogpaw(light gray tom. Training for 2 moons)
Havenheart-black and white she-cat

Queens
Icewing-white she-cat with blue eyes(mother of ?'s kits: Hailkit, a light gray tom with white flecks, and Oakkit, a dark

orange tom. 4 moons old)
Mistystar-gray she-cat with blue eyes(mother of ?'s kits: Bluekit, a gray-blue she-kit, Stormkit, a light gray tom, Firekit, a light orange tom, Streamkit, a light brown she-kit, and Mosskit, a brown tabby she-kit. 1 moon old)
Mosspelt-tortoiseshell she-cat with blue eyes(expecting ?'s kits. Due in 3 moons)

Elders
Pouncefoot-ginger and white tom
Rushtail-light brown tabby tom

Cats Outside Clans
Ziggy-ginger and white tom(kittypet)
Victor-pale brown tabby tom(kittypet)
Scarlet-ginger she-cat with bright eyes(kittypet)
Riga-slender black tom(kittypet)
Jocelyn-dark grey she-cat with amber eyes(kittypet)
Squirrel-orange she-cat with green eyes(rogue)
Cinder-gray and white she-cat(loner)
Thorn-large golden brown tabby tom(loner)

Bramblestar looked from his spot at the two she-cats, then at Thornclaw.

"I, uh, see." Bramblestar muttered.

"I have a great idea!" Thornclaw snarled with a smile. "Make them still hunt and train while they're expecting kits!"

"NO!" Gemlight roared. "They will be in the Nursery till their kits are apprentices. Thornclaw, this is *not* the punishment we were expecting from you!"

"I know." Thornclaw shrugged his shoulders. "That's why it was very easy to sneak past you two."

"Thornclaw, you are banished!" Bramblestar growled. "GET OUT!"

"You don't tell me what to do!" Thornclaw lashed his tail. "FINE! I'll leave your dumb Clan!"

The huge tom got up and shoved both Hollypaw and Sorrelpaw before breaking into a sprint out of the Territory.

Cats began yowling as Rosepetal and Bumblestripe escorted the two apprentices to the Nursery.

"Bramblestar, how could you?! They're *apprentices!"* Millie screeched.

Gemlight's ears flattened as several cats glared at her.

"This is her fault!" Spiderleg snarled, pointing a ragged claw at Gemlight. "She got them in trouble! Who knows, her and Thornclaw were probably working together!"

No, but yes, it was my fault...

"I...I'm leaving this Clan, Bramblestar." Cinderheart meowed. "My mate is dead and who knows what will happen to Hollypaw and Sorrelpaw. But I do not wish to find out. Fernpaw, you can come with me."

"No, mother." Fernpaw said firmly. "I'm going to be by my siblings's side, if you want to be a coward and give up on what's left of your family, be my guest."

"I'm not being a coward." Cinderheart meowed dully. "I...I just need to live off on my own...maybe find some new cats, or live with some twolegs..."

"Mom! You can't leave!" Sorrelpaw gasped. "What about your grandkits?!"

"I have no kits, therefore I have no grandkits." Cinderheart turned to Bramblestar. "I will be leaving now, goodbye ThunderClan."

Cinderheart turned and left the camp, walking away until she disappeared from view.

Millie approached Hollypaw and Sorrelpaw and slowly lead them both back inside the Nursery.

"I don't want to go to the Gathering, Bramblestar." Fernpaw meowed. "I'm staying with my sisters."

"Very well." Bramblestar meowed, still numb from shock. "Is there any other horrible news that I have to deal with, Gemlight?"

"Sandstorm has really bad greencough." Jayfeather approached Bramblestar. "And if I don't stay here, she might not be alive by the next sunrise. Losing a lot of her kin has, well, taken a toll on her."

"Great, so I'll take Gemlight, Brackenfur, Spiderleg, Rosepetal, Ivypool, Cherryfall, and Molewhisker with me." Bramblestar sighed. "It'll be a small group to the Gathering, but many of you need to spend the night taking care of each other. Bumblestripe, take a patrol soon to make sure that Thornclaw and Cinderheart have left the territory."

"Yes, Bramblestar." Bumblestripe meowed.

"Gemlight, walk with me. I want you to be careful with our kits." Bramblestar looked at the sky and his eyes glared. "*StarClan is against us..."*

A Doomed Clan

[image]

Bramblestar lead the small group around the lake to the island, and saw all the Clans were waiting already.

Gemlight noticed Hootcall, the WindClan warrior that told her that Ryekit was dying, was there.

She quickly broke away from the group and ran to him.

"Hootcall!" Gemlight meowed. "How's Ryekit? Is he feeling better?"

"Yes." Hootcall looked up at Gemlight optimistically. "He has started playing with his brother and tried playing with Heathertail's kits! He's even helped Kestrelflight with finding more catmint in case another cat gets sick again!"

"That's wonderful to hear!" Gemlight purred.

"How about your kits? Due when?" Hootcall asked.

Gemlight frowned and remembered that she was expecting Bramblestar's kits, the tom that ruined ThunderClan.

But he's changed, he isn't trying to kill anyone right now...is that how I base my standards? Shouldn't I have a mate that doesn't kill anyone? Why am I even deputy?!

"Gemlight?" Hootcall asked. "You going off to la-la land there?"

"No!" Gemlight said suddenly. "Um, two moons."

"Very nice, the leader's kits." Hootcall meowed. "You'd make a great mother."

"Th-thank you." Gemlight stammered.

"Hootcall! Quit flirting and join us!" Featherwisp called, who was

sitting with Havenheart and Molewhisker.

"Oh, coming sister!" Hootcall smiled and trotted over to his sister.

I miss my siblings, when we were born under a nice roof in Twolegplace...

Gemlight noticed the leaders already positioned themselves on the lower branches, looking down expectantly at the Clans.

"My kits are growing well." Mistystar started with pride. "Mosspelt is expecting kits. And you wouldn't believe what Firekit caught last sunrise-"

"No one cares, Mistystar. No one wants to hear you gossip." Rowanstar growled in annoyance. "Pinepaw and Flamepaw are now apprentices, and Grassfeather should be having her kits anytime now."

"We'll be patient." Snaketail chuckled. "I can hardly wait for my kits to arrive though."

Gemlight looked down, *he* probably didn't kill anyone.

"Barkpaw, Littlepaw, and Skypaw should be having their final assessments in a moon or so. And Heathertail's kits are doing wonderfully well." Onestar meowed. "Ryekit has made a great recovery, despite ThunderClan's attempts to kill our kits."

"We never tried to kill your kits!" Cherryfall snapped.

"Wait a-where's your medicine cats?!" Owlclaw snarled.

"Jayfeather is currently tending to one of our elders." Bramblestar answered.

"What about his apprentice? Why couldn't she come?" Littlecloud's apprentice, Milkpaw, asked.

"She-"

"Is tending to her knocked up sisters!" Spiderleg yelled. "I can't take

this anymore! Thornclaw knocked up Sorrelpaw and Hollypaw because of that stupid snitch!"

Spiderleg pointed his tail at Gemlight, and the Clans broke out into outrage.

"Apprentices expecting kits?! What is wrong with Bramblestar?!"

"I knew that Thornclaw was no good!"

"Where's Squirrelflight and Leafpool?"

Gemlight looked to the last voice and saw Willowshine looking straight at her with sad eyes.

"Where are they? I haven't seen them in four moons." Willowshine whimpered.

"They..." Gemlight turned around only to be slapped by Heathertail.

"First you kill Lionblaze and then you have a tom force himself on his kits?!" Heathertail roared.

"Bramblestar's going to hu-"

But Gemlight's warning came too late, the malicious look in Bramblestar's eyes that he had killing Lionblaze returned as he ran like a tiger and slammed his paw into Heathertail's skull with the power of a grizzly.

Heathertail fell limp and rolled to her father's paws.

Onestar looked traumatized and quickly put his ears against his daughter's body.

"She's still alive!" Onestar gasped with relief. "KESTRELFLIGHT! Get the warriors to get her back to camp NOW!"

Hootcall and Featherwisp quickly lifted Heathertail's body and several warriors escorted them off the island, Kestrelflight quickly following.

Bramblestar stood in between Gemlight and the furious WindClan leader as he stepped toward Bramblestar.

"You're lucky I know better then to hurt someone during a *Gathering."* Onestar snarled. "I will *kill* your mate and her unborn kits. And until I do, this is war!"

Onestar lead the remainder of his Clan off the island, ShadowClan and RiverClan left as well.

Bramblestar and his cats left last.

"Why did you do that?! Now we're going to lose even more cats Bramblestar!" Ivypool snapped. "I don't even know if my sister will be safe!"

"Gemlight?" Cherryfall was looking at the deputy with worried eyes. "Are you alright?"

"No." Gemlight sobbed and ran ahead back to camp as fast as she could.

Why does this have to happen to my kits?! I just wanted to stay out of the way and let Bramblestar and Squirrelflight be together! Why did I join this stupid Clan?!

"Stormcloud!" Gemlight finally sobbed, Stormcloud ran from the warrior's den to her side.

"What? What's wrong?" Stormcloud asked, hesitantly putting his tail on her shoulder.

"WindClan is starting war with us because Bramblestar nearly killed Onestar's daughter!" Gemlight cried. The whole Clan gasped.

"Our kits!" Millie whimpered. "Crowfeather would never hurt them would he?"

"He let Breezepelt and Lionblaze fight." Sandstorm wheezed bitterly. "I'm sure he'd let cats kill your kits too!"

"Sandstorm, please rest." Jayfeather meowed. "Your comments

aren't helping!"

"That stupid mouse-heart Cinderheart leaving my grandkits didn't help!" Sandstorm snarled. "Don't help me. They're just going to die not long after I do!"

Fernpaw glared at her grandmother while she was in the Nursery comforting her sisters.

"Why did Bramblestar nearly kill Heathertail?" Briarlight hissed. "It must've had to do with you! You've influenced every death in this Clan!"

"I didn't kill anybody!" Gemlight protested.

"But what if I lay a paw on you?" Briarlight taunted, crawling towards her. "Then Bramblestar will kill me, watch!"

"Don't please!" Gemlight cried.

Briarlight moved towards her in a rather fast pace for a crippled cat.

"I don't want to hurt you! Stay back!" Gemlight snapped. "I'm your deputy and a queen!"

Briarlight struggled to get closer, she was hyperventilating. She stopped and gasped.

"Jayfeather, what's wrong with her?!" Gemlight yelled.

"Her heart is weak, she isn't supposed to move around camp that fast!" Jayfeather snapped. "Briarlight get back here!"

Briarlight stared at Gemlight with a pleading look.

"Leave...this...Clan" Briarlight dropped to the dirt and her body went still.

"BRIARLIGHT!"

Onestar One War Part 1

[image]

Jayfeather looked Briarlight and turned to Gemlight.

"She'll be OK." Jayfeather finally said.

"Thank StarClan." Gemlight sighed.

"Don't be so relieved" Briarlight rasped. "You'll be kicked out before leaf-fall."

"Rest, Millie's worried sick." Jayfeather replied. "You should leave, Gemlight."

"But what about-"

"I meant this den, not the Clan." Jayfeather growled. "*Although you should leave this Clan too."*

Gemlight winced as she realized that despite being a queen, she was still deputy, and she had to help prepare for this fight.

She walked out of the medicine cat's den and saw cats all over the place, half with Bramblestar and the other half with Brackenfur.

"Where's Dovewing?!" Bumblestripe cried to Brackenfur. "She must've been kidnapped by WindClan! Our kits are missing!"

I have an idea of where she took them

"Brackenfur, I'd like to send a patrol to-"

"Shut your mouth, this is your fault." Brackenfur growled over Gemlight.

"I can just report to Bramblestar you know!" Gemlight hissed. "Dovewing took her kits to ShadowClan!"

"Had to get the last word in didn't you?" Spiderleg snarled. "Go back in the Nursery, flea-brain!"

What?! No one was listening to her!

Bramblestar was talking to a group of warriors when Gemlight walked towards him.

"Bramblestar?" Gemlight meowed. "I think Dovewing took her kits to ShadowClan."

"She can take her kits to StarClan for all I care, we're so busy that I can't worry about that now." Bramblestar sighed. "Brackenfur's doing your duties till our kits become apprentices, OK?"

"What?" Gemlight gasped.

"I should've done this when you started expecting our kits, but a war is starting...just stay in the Nursery." Bramblestar laid down and put his head in his paws. "I should never have made you join this Clan. I'm so sorry...I can't be your mate anymore, I need to protect this Clan."

Gemlight just stood in place, staring down at him.

She didn't feel moved to say anything, so she said nothing and walked away.

"Gemlight, wait!"

Gemlight was just about to leave camp when she saw Stormcloud run to her side.

"Where are you going?" Stormcloud asked.

"Bramblestar dumped me, so I don't know." Gemlight sighed.

"Don't leave." Stormcloud frowned. "I heard Brackenfur and Spiderleg and all those other cats pick on you, they can jump in a lake. We'll fight WindClan and make it out alive, I promise."

"But-"

"Forget Bramblestar, I'll help you raise the kits along with the rest of the Clan." Stormcloud looked at her and rested his tail on her shoulders. "It'll be OK."

"Sure." Gemlight sighed. "It seems that he'll probably make Brackenfur deputy for good."

"It won't be the end if he does." Stormcloud replied. "I'm still your friend, and you'll have your kits."

"WINDCLAN!" A voice cried from camp.

"Oh no." Stormcloud whispered before turning to Gemlight. "Stay where you're at, or hide in a burrow. We'll fight them off."

Stormcloud licked Gemlight's forehead before running back to camp.

Bramblestar ran out of his den and saw Onestar growl as he lead his cats into camp and leaped into battle.

"Find her and kill her on sight!" Onestar snarled.

"Attack ThunderClan!" Brackenfur roared. All the warriors leaped into the WindClan warriors in a fury of blood and claws.

Bramblestar saw the two apprentices Barkpaw and Skypaw sneak ahead to the other side of camp.

They're going to look for Gemlight!

"Berrynose, Poppyfrost!" Bramblestar growled. "The apprentices!"

The two mates turned from fighting Gorsetail and both leaped at the apprentices and clawed at them.

Bramblestar got up, he knew he had to help fight for his Clan. He leaped out of his den and slammed into an unsuspecting Onestar and slammed a paw into his head.

"I'm going to rip all your lives from you!" Onestar growled, getting up and slamming his paws down on Bramblestar's shoulders.

Ivypool ran to her leader and clawed Onestar's side, Onestar swung around and smacked her aside.

He finally turned around and slammed his paws across Bramblestar's skull and everything went black.

"Get up."

Bramblestar got on all four of his paws and saw Firestar walk over to him.

"You messed up." Firestar muttered. "You better find her and make things right."

"But Gemlight must really be upset-"

"I'm talking about Squirrelflight!" Firestar hissed. "She is in Twolegplace beyond ShadowClan. Chase WindClan off and find her!"

"But-"

"Just do it!" Yellowfang hissed beside Firestar.

Bramblestar saw Hollyleaf give a reluctant nod and he was ready to take Onestar down.

Stormcloud saw Bramblestar get up and look rapidly around the fighting cats.

"Where's Onestar?" Bramblestar rasped.

"Trying to break into the Nursery." Stormcloud answered. "I've been waiting for you to get up."

"You OK? Did you get a bad injury?" Bramblestar asked.

"The only bad injury is Gemlight's heart from your words." Stormcloud muttered. "Leave me alone."

Stormcloud turned tail and leaped at Leaftail, whom was trying to enter the Nursery.

Bramblestar dashed and leaped with unsheathed claws onto

Onestar's back.

"G-get off!" Onestar stammered as he could barely handle Bramblestar's weight.

"Not until your Clan leaves!" Bramblestar snarled.

"Warriors! Attack him!" Onestar gasped as he kept trying to stay on his paws.

Gemlight walked farther away from camp until she saw Tigerheart and Dovewing on the ShadowClan border with their kits.

"This'll be Eaglekit, and the gray tom will be Stripekit." Tigerheart purred. "Proper ShadowClan names!"

"Of course, not disgusting Petalkit and Ripplekit!" Dovewing showed her tongue in disgust. "Has Grasswing had her kits yet?"

"She had them two sunrises ago." Tigerheart purred. "But we don't need our kits to nurse on her because they'll have you! You...you're coming to ShadowClan with them right?"

"Yes." Dovewing meowed. "Let's go."

Gemlight gasped and rushed to call them when she collapsed in a sweat, horrified at the timing.

Her kits were coming.

Onestar One War Part 2

[image]

Not even near a burrow...what if a warriors sees me having kits and attacks?

Gemlight cried out as a another spasm shook through her body and knew that somecats had to have heard that.

As long as they weren't WindClan ones, she should do fine.

I hope, oh my kits I'm so sorry.

"They're my kits too Millie!"

"No! They belong in ThunderClan!" Millie growled in front of the Nursery, swiping her claws at Crowfeather's nose.

"Gorsefall! Crouchfoot!" Crowfeather hissed. "Help me take these kits!"

"Go away!" Bramblestar stood between Crowfeather and Millie and headbutted him.

Stormcloud ran to help to but tripped and stumbled in shock when he heard Gemlight's cry.

"What was that?" Weaselfur growled.

"It's his mate!" Onestar purred in triumph. "GET HER!"

Suddenly, WindClan became a ferocious wave a cats desperate to weave their way to the other side of camp.

Stormcloud looked in horror and ran out of camp, determined to find Gemlight

"I just want to give up already!" Blossomfall panted after fighting off a WindClan apprentice. "Bramblestar, it's not worth it!"

"No! I'm not giving...up, not ever!" Bramblestar snarled, slamming his head into Onestar's. The blow sent the limp WindClan leader tumbling into a tree.

"How many lives does he still have?!" Leaftail gasped, running towards Onestar. "Onestar!"

"Gemlight!"

Stormcloud finally saw the pregnant she-cat by a tree panting heavily. He had brought Jayfeather along, which he was grateful that he remembered to do so.

"You better not kill her kits just cause you don't like her." Stormcloud snarled at the blind medicine cat. "Her kits better be unharmed."

"You really think I'd kill her kits for that? Fox-brain." Jayfeather snapped, he then walked towards Gemlight with a branch. "Here, bite."

Gemlight bit down on the branch and was still in pain when Jayfeather began walking away.

"Wha? Jayfeather what're you doing!" Stormcloud hissed.

"WindClan is still fighting! My skills are needed there not here." Jayfeather hissed. It had just occurred to Stormcloud that Jayfeather may not kill the kits, but he could still walk away from further helping.

"JAYFEATHER!" Stormcloud roared after him as he ran back to camp.

"The first kit..is coming!" Gemlight gasped.

It was a miracle that Stormcloud knew what to do to keep the kits warm and ready to suck on the queen's milk.

The first kit came out as a dark brown tom, the spitting image of Bramblestar.

If only he didn't Stormcloud thought with a twinge of resentment at the kit's look. He licked the kit and placed him to Gemlight's belly.

The next kit was a white she-cat and the last kit was a golden brown tabby she-cat.

Once Gemlight had all of them near her belly, she looked at them with pain.

"They're kits, Gemlight." Stormcloud said warily. "They did nothing wrong."

"But I did conceiving them." Gemlight placed her head on her paws. "They should never have been born."

Anger flared inside Stormcloud, all kits are meant to be born!

I'll have to watch these kits. I'm not sure if Gemlight is the type of queen to kill her own kits...

"What're their names?" Stormcloud asked trying to go to a different subject.

"Well, Bramblestar should-"

"He *lost* the right to name these kits when he left you." Stormcloud hissed.

"But I don't want to name them!" Gemlight protested.

Do you even want them?

"Twigkit." Stormcloud meowed, pointing to the brown tom. "Cause his fur sticks out like twigs."

"How about Bramblekit?" Gemlight suggested.

Stormcloud glared at her.

"Oh, yeah. Nevermind." Gemlight sighed.

"And the white she-kit can be Blizzardkit." Stormcloud said thoughtfully. "Do you think you can name the last kit?"

Gemlight turned to the mewing golden brown she-kit, loving pawing her mother's belly.

"Goldenkit." Gemlight finally replied. "She's golden."

"Very good!" Stormcloud purred, entwining his tail with Gemlight's and looking down at her beautiful kits. "What're you going to do now?"

"We can't really bring them back..." Gemlight replied.

"I think we can." Stormcloud looked towards the camp. "The noise of fighting has stopped, so it should be safe."

"Bramblestar will want to see them." Gemlight purred weakly.

Again with that fox-heart Bramblestar!

"He won't care about the kits, he won't feel responsibility towards them." Stormcloud said. "Let...let me be the father."

"You...want to be mates with me?" Gemlight asked.

"Yes." Stormcloud looked at her and her kits with strong feeling.

"...ok." Gemlight whispered.

Stormcloud smiled and laid down beside Gemlight, licking her kits, he wanted them to recognize who their *real* father is.

The first thing they'll see when they open their eyes is me, they'll think I'm their father.

"We should take them back." Stormcloud licked his new mate's cheek and got up.

Stormcloud picked up Twigkit and Blizzardkit while Gemlight grabbed Goldenkit and carried them back.

"Brackenfur! Brackenfur!"

"What happened?" Stormcloud asked in shock.

"Brackenfur became the new deputy! Ha! Serves that evil mouse-heart right!" Spiderleg growled.

Gemlight appeared from behind Stormcloud, and Spiderleg realized she just had kits.

"Oh..." Spiderleg muttered. "Carry on."

Gemlight and Stormcloud laid the kits on the Nursery floor and Gemlight crawled into the Nursery and brought them to her belly.

"They're beautiful, Gemlight!" Millie purred. "Two she-kits and a tom just like my litter!"

"Congrats." Sorrelpaw meowed bitterly. Hollypaw nodded reluctantly.

"I'm sure you two will have great kits too." Gemlight said.

"Sure." Hollypaw looked away.

Stormcloud had saw blood spray the whole camp when he left the Nursery.

"Did anycat die?" he asked.

"Onestar lost a life, but that's it." Brackenfur meowed. He strutted away with pride at his new deputy status.

Bramblestar left the medicine cat's den, one of his back legs wrapped in cobweb and limp.

"My kits were born?" Bramblestar asked longingly.

"*My* kits were born." Stormcloud snarled, staring down the leader as if he was a mouse. "I don't care how many cats you've killed, I'm not afraid of you. They're *mine,* and you lost the right."

Bramblestar looked at him weakly, knowing he deserved this.

Stormcloud smacked Bramblestar and hissed at him before walking into the warrior's den.

Serves him right, he'll regret ever leaving Gemlight.

Bumbly Road

[image]

The next day had arrived for the ThunderClan cats quite smoothly.

Except for one.

"Dovewing!" Bumblestripe called toward the moor.

"She's not there!" Gemlight meowed beside him.

Bumblestripe narrowed his eyes at her.

"Aren't you supposed to be with your kits?" Bumblestripe asked.

"Stormcloud's watching them because I'm the only one who knows where Dovewing at her kits are at." Gemlight explained.

"Where?" Bumblestripe meowed, his eyes wide.

"...ShadowClan, with Tigerheart." Gemlight replied.

Bumblestripe gave a puzzled look.

"OH! He kidnapped them?!" Bumblestripe hissed, to which Gemlight shook her head.

"They followed him there-"

"To avoid getting hurt if they didn't listen to his demands!" Bumblestripe concluded. "I'll ask Brackenfur if I could lead a patrol over to there to save them!"

The tom took off before Gemlight could say another word.

"Brackenfur, I...have to leave."

The deputy walked in the leader's den and stopped when he heard the words.

"What?! Forever?" Brackenfur whispered.

"No, I have to find Squirrelflight." Bramblestar explained. "And bring her back."

"But she's dead I thought!" Brackenfur replied.

"I don't...think she is." Bramblestar muttered guiltily. "I'll be back eventually, but till then, you're in charge."

"Will do." Brackenfur puffed his chest and walked out of the leader's den and Bramblestar followed.

"All cats that can hunt come here!" Bramblestar meowed, seeing Gemlight and Bumblestripe coming from the moor side. "I'm leaving to find Squirrelflight!"

Gemlight looked away and went into the Nursery, Bramblestar was shaken by how little she seemed to care.

Does she not love me anymore?

"And hopefully, I will return with her to camp." Bramblestar added. "I will go now, Brackenfur is in charge till I come back."

Bramblestar slowly left camp, and stopped.

I'm leaving my kits behind to find a she-cat that I hate...

But this is what StarClan told me to do, I must head to Twolegplace.

Bramblestar sent a silent prayer that StarClan protect his kits, then he left.

"Brackenfur!"

Gemlight saw Bumblestripe run to the deputy with eyes shining.

"Gemlight told me that Dovewing and our kits are in ShadowClan!" Bumblestripe hissed. "They were kidnapped!"

Gemlight winced at Bumblestripe's obliviousness to the situation, that they weren't his kits NOR were they kidnapped.

He would have to learn the hard way.

"Is this true Gemlight?" Brackenfur meowed.

"They are in ShadowClan, yes." Gemlight replied.

"We'll take a patrol to escort them back." Brackenfur announced. "Gemlight, Ivypool, Berrynose, Lilyheart, Whitewing, Bumblestripe, Rosepetal, and me."

Gemlight looked at Rosepetal and she ducked her head from the queen's gaze.

"Me and Bumblestripe will go to the camp while the rest of my patrol will wait in the bushes." Brackenfur explained. "If I give the signal, all of you must attack. Let's go."

Gemlight had many thoughts on her mind as she followed the patrol, and was happy that Stormcloud was watching her kits.

Although, they are yours. You shouldn't be leaving them behind.

I'm not! I just need to see to it that Bumblestripe will open his eyes!

Brackenfur stopped the rest of the patrol and allowed himself and Bumblestripe to move ahead.

Gemlight crouched down behind the bushes between Ivypool and Rosepetal.

Now all she had to do is watch it all unfold.

The two toms walked over to the leader's den and Crowfrost stopped them with a snarl.

"You think you can just stroll right into our camp?!" Crowfrost hissed angrily.

"I think I just did." Brackenfur replied smoothly, further angering the black tom.

"What do you want Brackenfur?" Rowanstar meowed, walking out

of his den.

"We want Dovewing and our kits!" Bumblestripe hissed.

"HA!"

Gemlight flinched as she saw the big tom Tigerheart stroll over casually while maintaining a malicious grin.

"*Your* kits?" Tigerheart echoed tauntingly. "They're *mine!"*

"Liar!" Bumblestripe hissed. "You kidnapped my kits!"

"Look at Eaglekit!" Tigerheart gently placed the dark brown she-kit in front of Bumblestripe. "Eaglekit? Tell Dad who this is."

"An enemy, he stinks of ThunderClan!" Eaglekit squeaked, her amber eyes sharp.

"Tell him who your Dad is." Tigerheart purred, savoring every moment of Bumblestripe's horrific realization.

"Tigerheart! Your my Dad!" Eaglekit pointed a paw to the brown tom.

"You brainwashed them!" Bumblestripe growled. "Her name is Petalkit!"

"Who does *Eaglekit* look like more?" Tigerheart sneered. "You or me?"

"Looks don't matter!" Bumblestripe retorted, raising his voice to a screech. "DOVEWING!"

The Nursery remained silent, until slowly the gray she-cat stepped out of the Nursery.

"Thank StarClan!" Bumblestripe gasped, jumping to the she-cat's side. "You're OK, we'll get our kits out of here!"

Dovewing replied by turning to him and slamming her paws down on Bumblestripe's skull.

"Leave Tigerheart and our kits alone!" Dovewing yelled.

"HEY!" Rosepetal snarled, jumping out of the bushes. "Don't hurt him!"

"Aren't you upset?" Dovewing taunted. "Believing that he was the father of my kits? Watching him under my spell?"

"Yes, but I'm upset at you!" Rosepetal sobbed. "You manipulated him!"

"These kits are my grandkits." Rowanstar finally explained to Brackenfur. "They will be raised as ShadowClan warriors."

Bumblestripe stood in pure shock.

"Dovewing? Why did you mate with him?" Bumblestripe whispered.

"Because he's *so* much better than you." Dovewing purred, entwining her tail with Tigerheart's, making Bumblestripe jump.

"I don't...I don't know who you are." Bumblestripe stammered.

"A ShadowClan queen." Tigerheart replied. "Now get out."

"C'mon Bumblestripe." Brackenfur sighed, leading the rest of us back. "Let's go."

Bumblestripe looked clearly shaken, traumatized even. Rosepetal attempted to lead him back, but he just moved slowly in a state of shock.

...

Bramblestar hissed at his luck, barely in Twolegplace yet and it had already begun to snow.

He was close, he knew because he remembered this way.

A clump of snow fell from one of the roofs and onto his face, he hissed in frustration.

Cinder's New Home

[image]

Bramblestar continued his journey through Twolegplace, the snow becoming big piles as he progressed through, looking for a certain firey orange pelt.

I must bring her back to ThunderClan, make things right with StarClan.

A blizzard started to brew heavily, making Bramblestar begin to lose sight of what was ahead, hissing in frustration.

He saw lots of cats retreat to their nests and desperately looked for Squirrelflight with no luck. He ran needing to find an old burrow or anything to stay in till the blizzard stopped.

He saw a certain gray and white she-cat digging snow up in one spot towards the forest. He couldn't believe his eyes.

"Cinderheart?" Bramblestar meowed, voice shaken.

The she-cat looked at him in shock.

"It's Cinder now." She meowed blankly, then continuing digging. "My mate and kits are still in the burrow, I got to dig the entrance out."

"Let me help." Bramblestar said, joining Cinder in the digging.

"Cinder?" A tom meowed from the snow. "The kits are getting cold."

She's already moved on from Lionblaze and their kits, I can hardly believe it.

"Bruno, we're almost there." Cinder purred.

"*We're?"* Bruno echoed.

"An old friend of mine has showed up." Cinder meowed. "My first

litter is alright?"

Bramblestar curled his nose up at the blatant lie, thinking back to her pregnant daughters, who now seem to be dead to her.

Cinder pushed back the last clump of snow, revealing a orange and white tom with four kits at his belly.

Bramblestar blinked at took a minute to look at Cinder's new litter outside the Clan: a tortoiseshell she-kit, a dark orange tom, a grey and black tom, and a gray and white she-kit.

"That's a plentiful litter." Bramblestar commented. "What're their names?"

"Sun for the orange tom, Jay for the gray tom, Cream for the gray she-kit, and Dandelion for the tortie." Cinder explained.

So she hasn't completely forgotten, but she no longer cares.

"They're beautiful." Bruno purred. "I'm so glad to have the privilege of being a father."

"I bet." Bramblestar meowed, holding back bitterness in his voice. "I need a place to stay till the blizzard passes."

"Well, you're more than welcome!" Bruno chirped. "It'll be extra warm with more body heat in here."

Cinder gave a slow nod, moving to Bruno's side with their kits.

"Have you seen Squirrelflight Cinder?" Bramblestar finally asked.

"I try not to." Cinder muttered. "Her and her new friends are always stirring up trouble, it's why I had to move to the forest."

"Best decision you've made, dear." Bruno said lovingly. "You met me here."

"Yeah, true." Cinder meowed dully, making Bramblestar raise his eyes at her in surprise to her unenthusiastic tone.

He turned away from them and curled up in an attempt to get as warm as he could.

StarClan, I hope I'm making the right decision bringing Squirrelflight back to ThunderClan.

...

Gemlight woke up with her kits happily pawing at her belly, oblivious to the events that shook Bumblestripe to the core.

She hadn't had actual time with her kits since they were born, only to sleep beside them after a long day. But Stormcloud had been persistent on her not going on the patrols and spending some quality time with her kits.

It slightly annoyed her that he was doing this, stubborn on the thought that *Bramblestar* wouldn't keep her from hunting.

But he went on a journey to find Squirrelflight, he probably wanted them to be mates again and believed that he made the wrong choice.

It stung a little, but Gemlight believed that Stormcloud filled the holes in her heart.

She watched Twigkit's amber eyes flash awake and he nudged his sisters awake.

"Stormcloud." Gemlight meowed tiredly. "They're waking."

Moments later her mate entered the burrow and moved past the other queens. His eyes were bright as he enjoyed every waking moment of the kits like they were his own.

He was insistent to Bramblestar on that.

...

Bramblestar woke up after a well needed sleep and saw that Cinder was not in the burrow, but fortunately the entrance was only partially covered in snow, leaving a crack of light.

He tiptoed around Bruno and his kits and left the burrow.

He sniffed the air for Cinder and tracked her till he found her chasing a squirrel across the snow. She leaped and caught it, spending snow flying.

"Hey Cinder." Bramblestar meowed.

Cinder stopped and looked up at him.

"Hello Bramblestar, what brings you here?" She asked quietly.

"Wanted to hunt, talk some as well." Bramblestar replied.

"There's nothing to talk about." Cinder meowed dully. "I was a rogue all my life before I met Bruno and we settled down and had kits."

"We both know that's not true." Bramblestar snarled. "Who are your parents then?"

"Bracken and Sorrel." Cinder sneered.

"Who's Lionblaze then?" Bramblestar hissed.

Cinder flinched and Bramblestar had gotten the reaction he wanted.

"Well?" Bramblestar persisted.

"I...I don't know what you're talking about." Cinder lied.

"No one's here, *Cinderheart!"* Bramblestar hissed. "Not even you're new mate! So just tell me why you did it!"

"Did what?" Cinder narrowed her eyes at her former leader.

"Left your pregnant daughters when they needed you." Bramblestar whispered. "Not protecting them when that monster who attacked them is on the loose."

"Then why aren't you there?" Cinder retorted. "Since Thornclaw was *so* terrible and bad, why aren't you defending your *precious* Clan from him?"

"It was your Clan too!" Bramblestar snapped. "Born and raised in it! I know somewhere in your blackened heart that you still care!"

Cinder looked at him indifferently and began sniffing the air.

"What about the kits names?" Bramblestar pointed out. "*Jay?* DandeLION?"

Cinder disappeared and Bramblestar decided that it was no use when he had bigger issues to deal with. Cinder would live with pain for her stubbornness. He tried to reach out to her, but for now, he failed.

Bramblestar headed back to the burrow and saw that Cinder wasn't back from hunting yet.

"Hey Bruno." Bramblestar muttered. "Let Cinder know that I left, to go find Squirrelflight."

"Squirrelflight? Okay buddy." Bruno smiled. "Say goodbye kits."

"Bye Brambly!" The tortie squeaked, the other kits ran around Bramblestar and it painfully reminded him of his own back with their wonderful mother.

No doubt that Gemlight will raise our kits to be skilled and amazing warriors, but I must find Squirrelflight, I'm destined too.

Coming Back

[image]

Bramblestar still was walking through big clumps of snow, but at least the blizzard had stopped.

It should be easier now to find Squirrelflight. Unless she's with the other kittypets.

Bramblestar stopped when he saw several kittypets chasing a smaller white kittypet looking riled up as they chased her on the Thunderpath.

Bramblestar's heart stopped when he saw Squirrel leading them, going the fastest out of all of them.

"Stop Olivia!" Squirrel snarled at the she-cat. "You know what happens you steal food from us!"

The white cat tried to run as fast as she could, but unfortunately her plump figure made her progress just a little slower than the cats chasing her.

She stumbled and tripped on the Thunderpath, the Thunderpath tore clumps from her fur and she landed into a set of bushes next to it.

The gang that Squirrel was leading was closing in on the wounded she-cat. Even Bramblestar knew the wrongness of killing a defenseless kittypet.

"STOP!"

Bramblestar leaped between his former mate and the kittypet.

"*Squirrelflight?"* Bramblestar whispered.

"Her name is Squirrel." One of the cats hissed.

Squirrel didn't reply, just stood in surprise and wonder looking at Bramblestar.

"What're you doing here?" Squirrel gasped.

"Well, to take you home." Bramblestar blurted out. The other cats looked at each other.

"What? She lives here!" A gray tabby tom spat angrily.

"I...no, I was a part of ThunderClan." Squirrel admitted.

"You said you *weren't!"* Another cat yowled.

"Get her!" Several cats shouted.

Bramblestar and Squirrel took off with the latter ahead leading in a certain direction.

"Where are we going?!" Bramblestar called to her as they kept running.

"I need to bring someone with us to ThunderClan!" Squirrel replied.

Not a mate, right?

They kept running till they stopped at one of the Twoleg nests.

"Jocelyn!" Squirrel called. Moments passed before a dark grey she-cat appeared from the cat flap.

"Squirrel! Who's *that?!"* Jocelyn gasped.

"Bramblestar, leader of ThunderClan." Bramblestar growled.

"Come with us." Squirrel meowed.

"Oh, but our Twolegs!" Jocelyn protested.

"Join us please." Squirrel persisted again. "Or you won't see me again."

"Oh, okay." Jocelyn looked reluctant to do so but she turned to

Bramblestar and Squirrel and followed them.

They kept going onward sniffing the air for the gang that was chasing Squirrel.

They all tensed and showed their claws when a cat appeared in front of them.

"Wait stop!" The cat gasped. "It's me, Olivia!"

"You stole food from me!" Squirrel hissed.

"I couldn't starve after my Twolegs kicked me out!" The she-cat gasped. "Please! Let me go with you!"

"No, Bramblestar!" Squirrel growled.

"Come on, she can come." Bramblestar muttered.

Olivia sniffed and joined the three as they left Twolegplace together.

...

Several sunrises had passed and yet Bramblestar still wasn't back. Brackenfur lead the Clan as usual but Gemlight was getting annoyed at his pride, acting as if he was truly leader.

Maybe Bramblestar decided to live with Squirrelflight once he found her, maybe something happened to him.

Gemlight was more anxious about the latter until she heard a small wail. She jumped away from her kits and crawled out to see Bumblestripe crying on Rosepetal's shoulder.

"Bumblestripe, go on a patrol, it'll help." Brackenfur reassured him.

Bumblestripe left camp and Rosepetal followed.

"Okay, that ought to-"

"Brackenfur!"

The deputy looked and Gemlight's eyes widened as before her were Bramblestar, Squirrelflight, and two other cats she never met before.

"I've brought Squirrelflight, her friend Jocelyn, and this other kittypet here, to be part of ThunderClan." Bramblestar explained.

"What the heck?" Stormcloud growled. "So since you're not doing Gemlight anymore, you're going back to your first mate?"

"No, I was told by StarClan to do this." Bramblestar explained.

"Or your hormones." Ivypool sneered.

"*No."* Bramblestar hissed.

"Why'd you bring *three* she-cats then?" Ambermoon retorted, looking at them with hostile eyes.

"Cause they wanted to all join ThunderClan of course!" Bramblestar snapped. "We will feast-"

"It's leaf-bare Bramblestar." Brightheart muttered.

"Don't care. We'll be feasting." Bramblestar replied. "Brackenfur, send three hunting patrols and don't let them back into camp until they bring back *four* pieces of prey per patrol."

"You're being ridiculous." Blossomfall hissed.

"And *you,* my dear, will be going to bring back three by yourself on your patrol." Bramblestar meowed evilly. "So get to it."

Blossomfall growled bitterly before joining her patrol.

Squirrel was looking around camp and saw Gemlight bringing her kits back in the Nursery.

"Why hello, Gemlight!" Squirrel purred. "Those Stormcloud's kits?"

"Yeah, they're cute aren't they?" Gemlight purred back, she might as well kill her rival with kindness.

Unexpectedly, Twigkit trotted over and looked at Squirrel with big amber eyes.

Gemlight tried her hardest not to scream, Twigkit was the spitting image of Bramblestar. If that didn't give away the father, then nothing else would.

Squirrel's eyes flashed briefly, but she smiled.

"Yes, they are." Squirrel replied, she then nodded and turned to the kittypets she came with.

"Isn't this great?" Stormcloud purred, licking Gemlight's cheek. "All these new cats and a nice feast, our kits are beautiful-"

Gemlight stopped listening and blushed at the thought of Bramblestar's image, which was passed down to Twigkit. At least she had part of him from their relationship: their kits.

"Hold on, Gem." Stormcloud meowed, his ears perked. "Patrol's back."

Her mate trotted eagerly to the patrol that brought back four pieces of prey. Stormcloud hastily tossed a mouse several feet from the elder's den and carried a fat vole to Gemlight.

"Hey!" Sandstorm growled crankily. "I'm not just going to eat a mouse! Give me that vole!"

"Shut up you fox-face." Stormcloud snapped, shocking Sandstorm. "Here, Gemlight."

Gemlight downed the vole and was barely aware that all the patrols were back till Bramblestar stood proud before the Clan.

"All cats that can hunt their own kill come forth!" Bramblestar announced. "We are here to make two new cats apprentices and one old cat a warrior again."

Squirrel beamed at Bramblestar.

"Jocelyn, you are now Pebblepaw. Bumblestripe will teach you how

to live through heartbreak and stuff." Bramblestar muttered.

Pebblepaw trotted over and touched noses with Bumblestripe, who looked like he just stopped crying.

"Olivia, you are now-"

"Could I keep my name?" Olivia asked.

"No, we do not need another Daisy." Bramblestar explained. "You are now Milkpaw and Rosepetal will be teaching you."

Milkpaw rolled her eyes and touched noses to her mentor.

"And Squirrel, after several moons of absence I am glad to call you Squirrelflight again." Bramblestar concluded.

"Pebblepaw! Milkpaw! Squirrelflight!"

...

Squirrelflight watched as the night fell and all the cats went to their respective dens. The moon reflected on her emerald eyes.

She padded over to the Nursery and gazed at Twigkit.

There's no cat that could look more like Bramblestar, I can see it as clear as day!

She bared her teeth and turned away.

Gemlight will pay, this whole Clan will pay for my suffering.

To be continued in The Better Clan